

2-1-1973

# The antecedents of Council Bluffs, Iowa: From exploration to town charter

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THE ANTECEDENTS OF COUNCIL BLUFFS, IOWA:  
FROM EXPLORATION TO TOWN CHARTER

A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Department of History  
and the  
Faculty of the Graduate College  
University of Nebraska at Omaha

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

by  
Phillip L. Cooper  
February 1973

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8-6-73 Expt The author



Accepted for the faculty of The Graduate College of the University of Nebraska at Omaha, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts.

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Date	March 5, 1973
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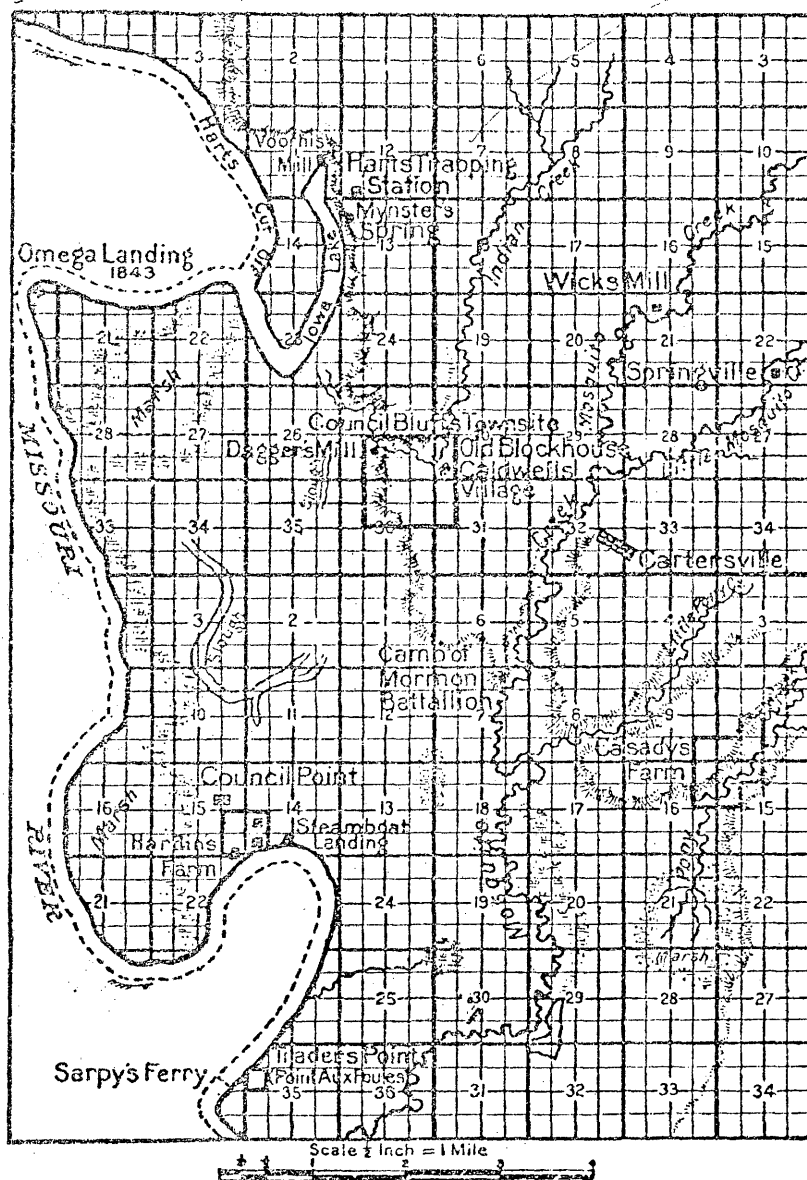
## PREFACE

As odd as it may seem the second oldest, second largest city in the eastern Nebraska-southwestern Iowa, area has been a neglected topic for historians. At a time when almost every town and way station has had its history written Council Bluffs, Iowa, has been overlooked.

This study is an attempt to at least partially fill the void. Council Bluffs' history is far too long and complex to relate in one study of this type, but hopefully, it will be considered as a beginning.

This study is somewhat impressionistic in nature. Records are scarce and those available during the Mormon period are all written by Mormons. The only non-Mormon paper, The Western Bugle, lost all of its back issues in a fire in 1853. The government surveys of the area were completed in 1852, but the land did not open until 1853. No census figures for Kanesville have been located either, the rapidly shifting nature of the population makes it very difficult to ascertain definite numbers. ✓

I wish to express my gratitude to the staff of the Council Bluffs' Public Library for their time, aid and patience. A very special thank you is extended the very cooperative staff of the historian's office in the archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints in Salt Lake City. However, it is for Dr. Roy M. Robbins of the University of Nebraska at Omaha that I reserve my greatest gratitude, for his time, guidance and patience. ✓



MAP OF THE VICINITY OF COUNCIL BLUFFS

Prepared by Charles H. Babbitt from U. S. Survey made in 1851-1852  
and from other reliable sources.

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## INTRODUCTION

Council Bluffs, Iowa, has a past woven deeply into the development of the Missouri River valley and points West. Its past goes back much further than most people imagine, and is in many respects both more complicated and more interesting than even amateur historians of the area are aware.

The land on which modern Council Bluffs now stands has belonged to three nations at one time or another, and has been a part of eight territories of the United States since 1803. Though France left little or no heritage in the area, it actually was the first owner. France claimed the area from about 1682 until it lost the area, along with the rest of its North American possessions, in the Seven Years War. By the Treaty of Paris, 1763, France turned over its possessions west of the Mississippi River to Spain, since Spain was considered to be of little threat to British power in North America. During their stay the French built no settlements in this area. They did, however, begin to build an interest in the Missouri River area as evidenced in the diary of Father Marquette in 1673, in which he described the mouth of the Missouri as he passed it on his way down the Mississippi River. Records indicate that in 1739 Pierre and Paul Mallet traveled up the Missouri to the Niobrara River and then cut back to the Platte and went on to the Arkansas, finding the long sought route to the Spanish South West. This expedition made them the first white men on record to pass what is now Council Bluffs. The route to the Spanish owned mines of

the southwest long remained the number one reason for exploration of the Missouri.

Spain actually did far more to gain knowledge of the Council Bluffs area than did France. They always considered it a key to their efforts to protect the gold and silver mines of their Mexican provinces. One must remember that it was still believed that the headwaters of the Missouri River were near those of the Rio Grande, more along the lines of the Platte River. The Spanish leaders wished to ensure control of the Missouri and Platte Rivers and sought to win the friendship and support of the Indians in the area. But it was not until the 1790's that they seriously sought to explore and develop the upper river as a source of furs.

They carried on extensive trade with all of the Indian nations on the lower Missouri River, as far north as the Oto, which would place them at least as far as Council Bluffs on the river which was their major source of transportation. Their involvement in the fur trade carried them as high up the river as North Dakota as it is evident that they were in contact with the Aricara nation.

Spanish efforts to keep British and American traders out of the area were only partly and temporarily successful. The official Spanish reports from St. Louis pleaded for more troops and funds, and related many intrusions among the tribes by British and American traders. The success of these groups in turning the Indians from Spanish allegiance with superior goods was often lamented as the more aggressive British and Americans pushed into the upper Missouri River valley.

Spain's traders were long hampered by official regulations, red tape, monopolies, and poor goods (unless purchased from the British). Spanish traders such as Manuel Lisa and Jacques Mackay were hindered by being forced to make official observations and reports of all kinds, besides being assigned the task of pacifying the natives, often at their own expense, to the point of being more government explorers and agents than traders. Expected to pacify Indians and pay expenses of troops for forts, they did not have the freedom, time or money to trade as they wished. Fur trade was never a major part of Spanish policy. Trade was strictly controlled and monopolies granted to the trade of each tribe. Their policies, overall, did not encourage traders. In fact, many were driven out of the fur business by the restrictions, extra costs and time lost on account of government intervention. Many St. Louis adventurers and businessmen lost money attempting to overcome the obstacles placed in their paths by an inept Spanish court which cared little, and knew less, about the Missouri River area.

The expeditions they sent out were often poorly led. Jean Baptist Trudeau, sent upriver in 1794, was a school teacher, not a trader or soldier and, while literate, he was ill prepared for the work. His mission was basically to drive out or keep out the British, even though sent out by the Company of Explorers of the Upper Missouri.

Lecuyer, sent out in April, 1795, wasted most of the goods entrusted to him by the Company of Explorers of the Upper Missouri. Though he passed by the modern site of Council Bluffs, he never made

it past the Ponca nation, where he wintered, and seems to have used up his trade goods for his own benefits and pleasures.

James Mackay, a Scotsman, was the best man sent up river by Governor Carondelet and Jacques Clamorgan, head of the Company of Explorers of Upper Missouri, but his actual goal was to find a passage to the Pacific and weaken British interests on the upper river rather than to actually trade for trade's sake or development of the area.

The attention of the Spanish authorities in Spain remained steadfastly riveted to the problems of keeping the Americans out of Florida, away from the Mississippi River and preventing their usage of the Mississippi. Even the use of much money, many troops (even a small fleet of gunboats) and much intrigue failed to complete their objective. The gains made by the Americans horrified the Spanish officials who were even more apprehensive about the Americans than the British.

Technically the Council Bluffs area was turned back over to France in 1800 by the Treaty of San Ildefonso, and then Napoleon sold it to the United States in the famed Louisiana Purchase of 1803 when his dream of a possible New World empire collapsed. Actually French possession of Louisiana lasted one day and the transaction was carried out by an American who was given the temporary power to accept the surrender of the area by Spanish officials to France and then to surrender the same to himself as the American emissary. French possession lasted for one day only because the French natives in St. Louis asked that they be allowed the one day under the French flag.

The site of Council Bluffs then passed through several American jurisdictions before it became a part of the Territory of Iowa in 1838.



It was first a part of the District of Louisiana, 1804-1805, then of the Territory of Louisiana until 1811. In succession it was a part of the Territories of Missouri, Michigan and Wisconsin before 1838, as well as thirteen years spent as a part of the unorganized territory of the United States from 1821-1834.

It is in the period after the take over by the United States that the area began to receive some serious attention by its new owner--the United States. Council Bluffs lay at a strategic position in the westward moving populations of the United States. The fur trappers and traders, steamboatmen, Indians, settlers, immigrants, goldseekers, freighters and railroad men developed the site into a city which has played a major role in the growth of the entire area and of the west beyond the Missouri River.

## CHAPTER I

### FUR TRADERS AND EXPLORERS

Late 1700's to 1803

The early development of the present Council Bluffs' site and the area in general was begun by those involved in the fur trade business, either as trappers or as traders. Their role began long before the United States gained possession of the area or even before the Lewis and Clark expedition. Frenchmen played an important role in the exploration and development of the Missouri River, first under France's flag, later under Spain's, and still later under American auspices, after the latter gained control of the Louisiana territory.

Many Frenchmen continued to work in the fur trade business under the Spanish government as individuals or as part of Spanish expeditions. Many of them lived with various Indian nations along the Missouri and took Indian wives. Toussaint Charbonneau, husband of the famed Sacajawea, was only one of several Frenchmen who had established homes on the river before 1800. Several of these men played important roles in later expeditions up the river because of their knowledge of the Indians, the country, and the Indian languages. Pierre Dorion, Joseph Garreau, Toussaint Charbonneau, Rene Jusseaume and Francis Valle were all men with experience on the river and among its tribes who aided the Lewis and Clark expedition in some role. They all became part of the expedition. Besides these were those who acted as interpreters who

lived among the Indians.

The Spanish actually began to push the exploration and development of the area only after 1790, even though their reports show as early as 1758 a knowledge of the Missouri River as far up as present day states of Iowa and Nebraska. Growing competition for trade on the lower Missouri River below Council Bluffs led Spanish traders to search for new fields of trade. The Spanish government of the province was deeply concerned by the aggressiveness of American traders moving up the Des Moines River into the Platte-Missouri region. The British were entering the area from the posts they had established on the Red River and were carrying on trade as far down river as the Sioux, and, on occasion, as far down as the Oto. Those intrusions on Spanish lands were objects of deep concern to provincial officials who sought desperately to build up their strength and influence in the area, but met with little success. From 1763-1803 their great fear was of an invasion which could remove the last barrier to their western mines. Yet it is known by the contracts granted to Spanish traders and trading companies that trade was carried on as far past Council Bluffs as the Ponca of the Niobrara River region of Nebraska at some time. Trade contracts from Spanish officials included provisions for pacifying the Indians and developing Indian barriers to further British encroachments. Provincial officials early decided that the area of the mouth of the Platte River was the key to holding the entire area and the last location suitable for any sizeable settlement on the Missouri, but no settlement was established in spite of its recognized importance. In fact, the Spanish had effected no permanent settlements on the Missouri

at any point before they were forced to give up the area.

The first United States Commandant of Louisiana, Amos Stoddard, wrote to the Secretary of War, Henry Dearborn, on June 3, 1804, that he estimated the entire white population of the new territory above the mouth of the Missouri River to be 1,219 and about 107 Negroes.<sup>1</sup> Yet, Iowa historian William J. Peterson proclaimed that the same area actually held only 765 people, including 55 slaves; he further states that there were no white men living along the Missouri slope of Iowa in 1804.<sup>2</sup>

Neither set of figures is fully acceptable. Stoddard's, which could only be based on guesswork, is probably far too high; Peterson's sources must have ignored traders and trappers living among the Indians. However, and most important to the development of our story, everyone seems to agree that in actuality there were no white settlements on the Missouri in the area of present day Council Bluffs, nor anywhere above it. The journals of the Lewis and Clark expedition confirm this statement. In spite of the fact of the obvious importance of the area immediately north of the mouth of the Platte, no permanent posts or forts had been established. In spite of their long ownership of the area neither France, nor later Spain, actively developed or populated the area. With the exception of a few "squawmen" they left no lasting

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<sup>1</sup>Clarence Edwin Carter, ed., The Territorial Papers of the United States, Vol. XIII: The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1803-1806 (Washington, D. C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1948), p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>William J. Peterson, ed., "Iowa in the Louisiana Purchase," The Palimpsest, Vol. XLV (Iowa City, Iowa: March 1964), pp. 101-102.

population in the area whatever. Even their geographical knowledge of the Missouri was slight. In fact it was assumed by most that the Americans were now all but sitting on top of the New Mexico mines. They still believed the route past Council Bluffs would lead to rivers whose headwaters were but a short portage from the headwaters of the Rio Grande.

Actually the Spanish did manage to build the first structure in the general area around Council Bluffs. In October, 1795, a Scotsman by the name of James Mackay, leading an expedition of Spanish fur traders and explorers, reached this area. To trade with tribes up the Missouri River was one of his objectives, but first he had to pacify those tribes on the river below the Mandan in the Platte River area in order to insure that his and later Spanish boats would be allowed to traverse the river unmolested by warriors along the lower river whose actual trade was of less value. In a letter to the head of the company, Jacques Clamorgan, Mackay stated:

If the Company is to continue in this distant country, it is absolutely indispensable to have the village of the Othos in your power. Otherwise, your pirogues will be more or less pillaged each year. I have promised them that you will have a fort built among them next year in order to protect them against their enemies; . . .<sup>3</sup>

Mackay goes on to state that the tribe is uneasy and resentful of past treatment by traders, and they must be convinced of Spain's sincerity. The fort, to be built at the mouth of the Platte, would also help gain

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<sup>3</sup>"Mackay to Clamorgan, Oct. 24-27, 1795," A. P. Nasatir, ed., Before Lewis and Clark, Documents Illustrating the History of the Missouri 1785-1804, Vol. I (St. Louis: St. Louis Historical Documents Foundation, 1952), pp. 97-98.

their second goal, that of preventing British or American traders or adventurers from having free access to the trade of the Pawnee or to the Platte River valley. In spite of Mackay's sound advice the fort apparently never was built.

Mackay's journal tells of the first actual structure built in the Omaha-Council Bluffs area, a trader's post. He wrote:

On this day I reached a place one league below the mouth of the Chato River (Platte). I camped in that place in order to visit the Othochita (Otoes) and take fresh provisions there. On the following day I reached a place one-half league above the said river, in order to construct a house for the wintering of the traders whom I left there on the 20th day following.<sup>4</sup>

One-half league would not be sufficient to place Mackay's trading house near present day Council Bluffs; it would probably be nearer to the position of modern day Bellevue. Harrison Clifford Dale in his book, The Ashley-Smith Exploration and the Discovery of a Central Route to the Pacific 1828-1829, asserts that Mackay's post was on the east bank of the river across from the mouth of the Platte.<sup>5</sup>

While Mackay does not specifically clarify the point for us, it would seem much more likely that the post would have been on the west bank for trade purposes, since the Oto, Pawnee, Omaha and Sioux were on the west side of the river. Regardless of its exact location, the post lasted for only one year, or rather, one trading season, and none of the journals or reports of the Lewis and Clark expedition, made nine years later, make any mention of the remains of such a structure, or any other

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., "Mackay's Journal," pp. 356-357.

<sup>5</sup>Harrison Clifford Dale, ed., The Ashley-Smith Exploration and the Discovery of a Central Route to the Pacific 1828-1829 (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1918), p. 23.

structure of any kind, in that area. Clark's journal does mention the remains of Peter Cruzatte's post a few miles above the Council Bluff, where he traded with the Omaha for two years, and it would seem likely he would have mentioned any sign of white men's presence below the point of their council, if it had existed.

Mackay's third objective had little to do with Council Bluffs; it was to find the overland route from the headwaters of the Missouri to the Spanish Southwest which both Spanish and French exploration had long sought. One of his group, by the name of John Evans, seems to have actually accomplished that feat by crossing from the Missouri to the Platte by means of the Niobrara River and ending up in Santa Fe, thus deepening the conviction of the Spanish authorities of the exposed position of their valuable possessions in the Southwest and, more important, in Mexico. However, time was running out for them, their worst fears were about to be realized.

Even if there were no permanent towns or posts planted, the Spanish and French fur traders did develop a wealth of information about the area. They early recognized the area as a critical position and it received much attention in their letters and reports. Lewis and Clark had, in their employment, several men familiar with the tribes of this area. James C. Olson, History of Nebraska, claims their expedition met eight parties of traders (going down river) before reaching the Platte River on their way west and eleven parties going up river on their return.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>James C. Olson, History of Nebraska (Lincoln: Uni. of Nebr. Press, 1955), p. 43.

Regardless of how much was known of the area around present day Council Bluffs, it is, without question, the Lewis and Clark expedition which gave, first to the area and later to the city, the name of Council Bluffs. Under the date of Friday, August 3, 1804, William Clark recorded a council with a large number of Oto and Missouri Indians, approximately two hundred and fifty Oto warriors and half as many Missouri. He then referred to the site of their encampment, "The Situation of our Last Camp Council Bluff or Handsom Prarie."<sup>7</sup>

In the official report which was made from their notes, Clark stated for August 3: "The incidents just related, induced us to give to this place the name of the Council-Bluff;". The "Handsom Prarie" title was completely gone.<sup>8</sup>

From this brief mention and the knowledge of the large council held there the area from the Platte River to the present site of Fort Calhoun became known as "the Council Bluffs." It was noted on the maps of the time and was known to all who were related to the fur trade or traveled the river as such. In fact, the location was commonly used to denote the upper from the lower Missouri. [Actually it was not until January 19, 1853, that the present city of Council Bluffs, Iowa, adopted that name.] It was, at that time, the largest and most important point on the river north of St. Louis, with the possible exception of St. Joseph, Missouri.

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<sup>7</sup>Bernard DeVoto, ed., The Journals of Lewis and Clark (Cambridge, Mass.: The Riverside Press, 1953), pp. 16-17.

<sup>8</sup>Captains Lewis and Clark, Travels to the Source of the Missouri River and Across the American Continent to the Pacific Ocean, Vol. I (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1815), p. 51.



Even in 1804 when the area was nothing but a raw, undeveloped wilderness William Clark recognized the area's potential. He stated in his journal:

The situation of our last Camp Council Bluff or Handsom Prairie, (25 days from this to Santa Fe) appears to be a very proper place for a Trading establishment and fortification . . . I am told Sentral to Several nations viz. one days march from the Ottoo town, one day and a half from the great Panis village, 2 days from the Mahar Towns, two 1/4 days from the Loups village, and convenient to the Country through which Bands of the Sioux hunt perhaps no other situation is as well calculated for a tradeing establishment.<sup>9</sup>

It is interesting to note that Clark mentioned the closeness of Santa Fe, as well as the position of the tribes, in regard to the Council Bluffs, It is said that Clark always felt the area would be the site of a major city in years to come. Its geographic location, the Indians and fine soil combined to make it an ideal place for a town of major proportions.

Although it is commonly accepted that the site of Lewis and Clarks' now famous council was on the west side of the river near Fort Calhoun, Nebraska, early writers in writing of Pottawattamie county and the city advanced the idea that the true site of the conference was on the east, or Iowa, side of the Missouri. Homer H. Field and Joseph R. Reed, History of Pottawattamie County, Iowa, From the Earliest Historic to 1907, contended that the site was on the Iowa side near a place called Mynster Springs which, in 1907, was at the northern edge of the city of Council Bluffs. They base their claims on the journal of Patrick Gass which noted the site of the encampment as

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<sup>9</sup> DeVoto, The Journals of Lewis and Clark, p. 17.

latitude 41 degrees, 17 minutes. Their feelings, in their own words, were that:

Although the exact spot is not positively known, this brings us to the Mynster spring, just at the north limit of the city, where the great bluff comes down to within a few rods of the river, and must have been a favorite meeting place for the tribes, as shown by a burying ground back on one of the bluffs, where are buried hundreds of all ages and both sexes; . . . This is the first we hear of Council Bluffs . . . although no permanent settlement was made for many years, it was a recognized point and designated on the early maps of the country and visited by trappers and traders that exploited this region . . .

I am aware that other points claim the distinction of being the original Council Bluffs, notably Fort Calhoun, about fifteen miles above Omaha, and another at Traders Point, six or seven miles south of the city of Council Bluffs, but as there are no bluffs at either of these places, the name would not be appropriate. Again, their journal describes the broad bottoms, and jungles abounding with wild grapes and alive with wild turkeys and other game, exactly as they were fifty years later, and further, if we accept the Fort Calhoun theory, in place of 41° and 17" it would be 41° and 7". We also find them on the east of the river when Sergeant Floyd died . . .<sup>10</sup>

While O. L. Baskin does not make any particular point about the location of the council, he does seemingly agree with Field and Reed that the famous council was held on Iowa soil, not Nebraska's. William J. Petersen, Superintendent of the State Historical Society of Iowa, does not challenge the idea of the council's location being in Nebraska in any of his articles from The Palimpsest. In fact, he does not seem to question it at all, but rather openly accepted it as a fact. Hiram M. Chittenden is probably the most noted author who has dealt with the Missouri River in the early stages of American ownership.

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<sup>10</sup>Homer H. Field and Hon. Joseph R. Reed, History of Pottawattamie County, Iowa, Vol. I (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1907), pp. 5-6.

He stated, as early as 1902, that Lewis and Clarks' conference with the Oto and Missouri was definitely held on the west side of the river. His works, The Fur Trade of the Far West, was published in 1902, five years before Field and Reeds' history of the county in which Council Bluffs resides. However, it is not the only possible source which they seem to have ignored in putting their work together. Apparently they never visited Fort Calhoun either for it certainly has bluffs of its own.

Actually, today's students of history do not question the point of the conference with the Indian chiefs. It would seem that Mr. Field and Mr. Reed were trying a little too hard to promote Council Bluffs. It might be mentioned that both were from that city. It would not be reasonable to assume that the expedition's leaders would ask or require the vast number of Indians assembled at the conference to cross the Missouri in order to meet them. It was part of their assignment to inform as many Indians as possible of the change of ownership of the Louisiana territory and the Indians of this area were on the west, not the east, side of the river. The Pawnee lived on the Platte, the Sioux wandered the plains following the buffalo and even the Omaha are generally reported as being on the Nebraska side of the river. Their reference to "broad bottoms abounding in game" could easily describe either side of the river slightly north of Council Bluffs. Moreover their insistence or contention that Sergeant Floyd died and was buried on the Iowa side at Sioux City is entirely worthless as acceptable evidence to support their case. The "Big Muddy" is famous for its shifting channels and sandbars, which caused expeditions to constantly change from one side of the river to the other in order to find water

deep enough to float their boats, avoid snags, sandbars, or treacherous cutbanks. The river was, at that time, a winding, looping stream constantly changing its course and thus leaving the "broad bottoms" first on one and then on the other side of its banks.

An explanation of the confusion can perhaps be provided by Elliott Coues in his book, History of the Expedition Under the Command of Lewis and Clark. In this work Coues added a lengthy footnote on the subject. His explanation was that Lewis's map, drawn in 1806, did not mark the site of the council or any "Council Bluff." However, a map drawn by William Clark in 1814 had the words "Council Bluff" lettered on the Iowa side of the river with no mark made to indicate the exact spot of the council. The vagueness of the exact location was, for historians of the period, compounded by the use of the term Council Bluff or Council Bluffs to indicate the whole range of hills on both sides of the river from the Platte to about twenty-five to thirty miles above it. It is quite apparent the Honorable Messrs. Field and Reed did not read Coues's work, however, for he goes on to state that: "The spot is marked on Nicolletts' map, as determined by him in 1839. It was later the site of Fort Calhoun."<sup>11</sup>

The expedition did make the area known to the world. It created tremendous public interest in the entire west, as well as the Missouri River valley. Eventually it was their conference which was to create the name of the city of Council Bluffs. In spite of their casual reference to the spot of their council the name stuck to the area for

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<sup>11</sup>Elliott Coues, History of the Expedition Under the Command of Lewis and Clark, Vol. I (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1893), p. 66.

years to come, and was eventually appropriated by the citizens of the town that arose on the east side of the river near the site of the earlier council.

## CHAPTER II

### INDIANS, MISSIONARIES AND FUR TRADERS 1804-1843

For almost fifty years the term Council Bluffs referred to that area from the mouth of the Platte to the present day town of Fort Calhoun. Various historians have tried, at times, to attach it to various places or posts, but the name did not generally mean a definite location until the incorporation of the city of Council Bluffs. During this period the area went through a number of changes in inhabitants and development. During this period the present site of Council Bluffs became inhabited and the site itself began to reflect the changes taking place along the Missouri as the frontiers of the United States approached, reached and jumped from the Missouri to the Pacific.

The exact history of the area in the early 1800's is rather vague. Large numbers of people were not yet in the area, and most of those that were in the area were not of the type which kept any elaborate records or diaries. Most of the people, both white men and Indians, were unable to read or write. Besides, most of them seldom visited civilization long enough to let their knowledge of the area spread to the normal population. The temporary fur trade posts of the area have long since been swallowed up or rotted away. In fact Hiram Chittenden reported in his work on the fur trade that, even as he wrote in 1902, it was impossible to recover even the names of many of those posts in the

area. Of those known to exist, few could be precisely located. His best estimate for the fifty year period after Lewis and Clarks' brief visit to the area was that about twenty different posts existed in the area for varying periods of time.<sup>1</sup>

The importance of the area was never questioned. In fact, in the early fall of 1804 the first American military commander of the upper Missouri, Major James Bruff, suggested to his superiors that a military post be established at the mouth of the Platte on the Missouri River. He was convinced the Platte was the route to the area in which American and Santa Fe traders could best meet with ease. Such a post would, in his opinion, prevent depredations of Indians on river traffic and the Santa Fe trade and create a higher regard for American might among the various tribes. He also added that it would prevent the British from smuggling trade goods into the area from Canada. However, his suggestion was not looked upon favorably and no action was taken. It was generally felt, in higher military circles, that American troops should be consolidated whereas such a post would tend to disperse troops. The matter was kept under consideration, however.<sup>2</sup>

The location and even ownership of the first trading post in the area after the American take over of Louisiana is not absolutely clear.

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<sup>1</sup>Hiram Martin Chittenden, The American Fur Trade of the Far West, Vol. II (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1902), pp. 949-950.

<sup>2</sup>Major James Bruff to James Wilkinson, St. Louis, Sept. 29, 1804," and "Secretary of War to Governor Wilkinson, War Dept., Oct. 16, 1805," Edwin Cartor, ed., The Territorial Papers of the United States, Vol. XIII: The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri 1803-1806 (Washington, D. C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1948), pp. 59 and 239.

Authorities of the past generally accepted the idea that the famous Missouri River explorer, trader and Indian agent, Manuel Lisa, built the first post in the area. They credit him with naming Bellevue, Nebraska and establishing a post there in 1805. Chittenden contends that Lisa's arch rivals, Robert McLellan and Ramsay Crooks were the first in the area. In 1807 they formed a partnership and got support from August and Sylvester Chouteau. On their way up river they ran into Ensign Pryor's small detachment who had tried to return the Mandan chief, Shahaka, who had returned with Lewis and Clark to visit President Jefferson. Pryor's small party was attacked by Aricara and Sioux who were at war with the Mandan. Crooks and McLellan dropped back down river and, supposedly, built a post on the present site of Bellevue in 1808.<sup>3</sup>

Actually, until the coming of the Mormons it seemed that Bellevue would be the great city which was almost bound to arise in the area. It was the center of the fur trade for many years and several posts were established there including those of Crooks and McLellan, Joshua Pilcher, Fontenelle and Drips and Peter Sarpy. Posts were established there because of the excellent location on both the Platte and Missouri Rivers, good trade with Oto, Pawnee, Omaha and Sioux and because of stronger, more hostile Indians beyond that point. The site also became the location of the area's first and major Indian agency.

In 1819 the first steamboat to successfully traverse the tricky currents of the Missouri River to the Council Bluffs area came up the river. The "Western Engineer," part of Major Long's Expedition, fought

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<sup>3</sup>Chittenden, The American Fur Trade, Vol. I, pp. 159-162.



its way up the "Big Muddy" to a spot just above Fort Lisa about five miles below the site of the original "Council-Bluff" and about ten miles above modern Omaha. Here they built a winter encampment and departed the following spring. The same year saw the arrival of troops who established Fort Atkinson near the "Council-Bluff." The fort was later abandoned.

An agency for the Oto, Omaha and Pawnee was established at Bellevue by Joshua Pilcher in 1823. John Dougherty later replaced Pilcher and purchased his trading post for the agency. Meanwhile the first missionaries entered the area. The Reverend Johnston Hykins, a Baptist, was first to enter the area of fur trade in 1833, but Reverend Moses Merrill, also a Baptist, established a mission and school for the Indians at Bellevue. He also brought with him the first permanent white women to become a part of the area's population, his wife, Miss Cynthia Brown and Ira Blanchard. In 1835 he became a government teacher to the same Indians. He died in 1840 and in 1846 Mr. and Mrs. Edward McKinney set up a Presbyterian mission and school which was to become far more successful than Merrill's.

In 1827 Fort Atkinson was abandoned by the military and Bellevue became the major post and principal shipping point on the upper Missouri, since, at that time, the Missouri ran much closer to the growing community. However, during this period events in the fur trade for the Missouri were leading to changes which would, for a time, lessen the importance of the area. Traders and trappers had suffered heavily from Indian attacks and ambushes along the Upper Missouri and its branches. Aricara and various Sioux tribes made movement up river both difficult

and dangerous. But it was the dreaded Blackfeet, spurred on and supplied by the British, who drove the Americans out of the area. Trade and trapping were risky in any area, but the Blackfeet caused constant losses of men, money and equipment. They defeated Manuel Lisa and forced him to return to the Bluffs area from which he coordinated attacks on British Indians during the War of 1812. Joshua Pilcher was eventually driven out in 1823 when a group of his men were ambushed and nearly annihilated, losing an entire year's harvest of furs. Pilcher long blamed Colonel Leavenworth for the failure of the army to impress the Indians with American military might and closure of the Missouri to the fur traders.

The end of fur trade expeditions up the Missouri was caused by many factors, including inept military leadership. The discovery of the Platte River route into the central Rockies, the development of the rendezvous system, Astor's entrance into the trade from the west coast and Great Lakes, the growth of the Santa Fe trade, the success of the Blackfeet, as well as the failure of the Yellowstone Expedition, all tended to distract from the importance of the Council Bluffs area. Major posts in the area were abandoned and traffic on the river lessened. In 1833 Robert Campbell wrote that, with the exception of the American Fur Company steamboats, none ascended as high as the Council Bluffs.<sup>4</sup>

Of the twenty posts estimated to have been in the area of Council Bluffs only three were ever actually on the east side of the river. Robidou, Papin, Chouteau and Bertold had a post at the mouth of

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., Vol. III, pp. 922-923.

the Nishnabotna, and Peter Sarpy set up a post at what became known as Traders Point, or later, St. Francis. This post existed for many years at a site about five miles below present day Council Bluffs at a point where the river made a sharp bend back toward the east. Sarpy kept the post open for many years and established a rope ferry at that point which was used by many Mormons to cross the Missouri.

The last post on the east side of the river is the one which, if it really existed, was actually located on land now included within present day Council Bluffs. Tradition in early Council Bluffs held that the town's first building was a trading post owned by a man by the name of Hart or Heart at a spot near the northern limits of the city near what was later called Mynster Spring. Charles H. Babbitt declared that he saw the remains of what looked like a post in 1855 about half a mile from the shore of Iowa Lake. He thought it would have enclosed about two acres. It was possible that the two springs at that site had carried silt into the lake, which was a cut-off of the Missouri, causing the lake shore line to move away from the post.<sup>5</sup>

Babbitt's account corresponds very closely with that of Father DeSmet's. DeSmet was asked about such a post and its owner in later days. In his reply he stated:

The remains alluded to must be the site of the old trading post of Mr. Heart. When it was in existence the Missouri river ran up to the trading post. In 1832 the river left it, and since

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<sup>5</sup>Charles H. Babbitt, Early Days at Council Bluffs (Washington, D. C.: Press of Byron S. Adams, 1916), pp. 12-13.

that time it goes by the name of "Heart's Cut-Off" leaving a large lake above Council Bluffs City.<sup>6</sup>

Field and Reed's account of Pottawattamie County fails to mention Hart at all, neither does Baskin's. But Dr. Edwin James, a member of the Long Expedition in 1819-20, recorded a story about the activities of a major Iowa Indian chief who became very friendly with the members of the expedition and knew English. James wrote that he stayed near the Council Bluffs that autumn, even after his people left, in order to sit in on the councils with various tribes. He then went up the Boyer River to trap beaver with his family. This chief, it seems, was known by several names including Hard Heart; in Iowan it was Wang-e-waha.<sup>7</sup>

In the "Platte Purchase" treaty at Bellevue in 1836 an Iowa chieftain "No Heart" was one of the signatories. The difference in "HardHeart" and "No Heart," he felt, was almost nil when one considered the problems of interpretation. It seems, at least, that an Iowa Indian chief by the name of " \_\_\_ Heart" did exist in the area in the mid-1830's, if not sooner. Charles H. Babbitt believed the post existed, perhaps as early as 1824. Babbitt admits that no real evidence can be found to authenticate his belief. No mention of a trader's license can be found nor any mention in the records of the American Fur Company or

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<sup>6</sup>Hiram Martin Chittenden and Alfred Talbot Richardson, ed., Life, Letters and Travels of Father Pierre-Jean DeSmet, S.J., 1801-1873, Vol. IV: Father DeSmet to A. D. Jones, Dec. 28, 1867 (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1905), p. 1353.

<sup>7</sup>Reuben Gold Twaites, ed., Early Western Travels 1748-1846, Vol. XIV: "Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains Performed in the Years 1819 and 1820" (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1904), p. 250.

any of its predecessors or successors. It would seem the regularly licensed traders would have reported and complained about an unlicensed trader competing against them. However, Babbitt still states: "It seems to be a fact, nevertheless, that someone named Hart or Heart did conduct a trading house or trapper's station at the indicated point prior to 1832."<sup>8</sup>

Babbitt, it would seem, was reaching in his search for support of his point. A brief study of the Oto, Missouri and Omaha treaty signed at Bellevue on October 15, 1836, reveals that no Iowa chiefs were recorded as signers. The name "No Heart" is found, but is to be found under the "Omahaw" delegation. The Omaha were generally found on the west side of the river fifty or sixty miles north of the present city of the same name.<sup>9</sup>

However, such a post would have had an ideal site, considering that it was on the east bank. It would have been well protected and the Boyer River and its valley, a few miles above, provided one of the few easy routes through the bluffs along the river. Besides the support of the accounts of DeSmet and Dr. Edwin James the maps of the American Fur Company's steamboats refer to the range of hills east of the river at the point as "Hart's Bluffs," and the new channel formed by a flood in 1832 was titled "Hart's Cut-Off" in their logs.

In 1837 the first sizeable population group entered and settled

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<sup>8</sup>Babbitt, Early Days at Council Bluffs, pp. 10-12.

<sup>9</sup>U. S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Indian Affairs, Treaty with the Oto, Etc., 1896, Sen. Doc. 319, Indian Affairs, Laws and Treaties, ed. by Charles K. Kappler (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), p. 481.

the precise area of what is now Council Bluffs. They came not by choice, but by force, even though they chose their exact location. The Potawatomi Indian nation was removed to western Iowa from the western shores of Lake Michigan by the United States government after many years of warfare. The Potawatomi had been defeated several times and were split into various branches of a once great Potawatomi nation and were scattered around the western shores of Lake Michigan and west to the lands of the Winnebago.

In July, 1830, treaties were completed with tribes including the Sac, Sioux, Iowa, Oto, Missouri and Fox. By their treaties the southwest area of modern Iowa and a triangular corner of what is now northwest Missouri were ceded to the U.S. In spite of these treaties the Potawatomi had problems with the tribes who once claimed the area, particularly the Sioux who raided into the area often. The Sioux threat was great enough to cause the erection of two posts for the protection of the Potawatomi.

On September 26, 1833, the first of several scattered groups that had once belonged to the Potawatomi nation signed a treaty at Chicago, Illinois; signers included Chippewa, Ottawa and Potawatomi Indian leaders. The treaty stipulated that they surrender all claims to lands from Lake Michigan west to the land already ceded by the Winnebago nation, north to the land ceded by the Menominees and south to lands ceded by the treaty signed at Prairie du Chien in 1829, about five million acres in all. In return they were to receive five million acres in western Iowa, the borders to be the Missouri River from the mouth of the Boyer to the mouth of the Nodaway, then due east (about

fifty to sixty miles) to the west line of the state of Missouri (which was farther east than the present border), along that line to the northwest corner of the state, then east along the state line to where it intersected with the Sac-Fox reservation border, then north on that line "so far as that when a straight line shall be run therefrom to the Boyer's river it shall include five million acres."<sup>10</sup>

The treaty provided the tribesmen with one hundred thousand dollars in goods, one hundred and fifty thousand dollars to satisfy claims against them, two hundred and eighty thousand dollars in annuities paid over fourteen years, one hundred and fifty thousand dollars "to be applied to the erection of mills, farm houses, Indian houses and blacksmith shops, to agriculture improvements" and to buy equipment, tools and stock, as well as to supply services of millers, doctors, farmers, blacksmiths and mechanics as found necessary by the President. An additional seventy thousand dollars was to be invested and the interest used to build schools, hire teachers and support domestic arts for the tribe.<sup>11</sup>

In addition a number of annuities were provided to particular leaders and, in some cases, their bands. Among those listed is Billy Caldwell who plays an important role in locating the Potawatomi at Council Bluffs.

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<sup>10</sup>U. S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Indian Affairs, Treaty With the Chippewa, Etc., 1833, Document No. 319: Indian Affairs, Laws and Treaties, ed. by Charles K. Kappler, (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), p. 402.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 403.

From 1834 through 1837 various bands of Potawatomi signed treaties ceding smaller areas of land, primarily along the Tippecanoe River in Indiana. These bands peacefully surrendered reservation lands of from two to ten sections in area in return for varying annuities, all pledged to move to a reservation established west of the Mississippi as provided earlier with the Exception of the "Treaty With The Potawatomi, 1837." This treaty provided for their removal to an area southwest of the Missouri River. The U.S. government agreed to give them land along the Osage River. This is actually much closer to the area to which the Potawatomi eventually were pushed.<sup>12</sup>

The removal of the Potawatomi was begun in 1835, within the stipulated two year time limit. The removal, carried out by the War Department, of which the Indian Bureau was then a part, was somehow fouled up. The contractors ended up by locating the Indians near and opposite Fort Leavenworth which was considerably below the mouth of the Nodaway River. Their stay there was brief in duration. In the fall of 1836 the Indians signed treaties which ceded the triangle known as the Platte Purchase to the U.S. to become a part of the state of Missouri. The Potawatomi emigrants, who were not on land allotted for them anyway, were again forced to pick up and leave for the country originally assigned to them in Iowa.

What was apparently the first group of Potawatomi Indians to arrive in the Council Bluffs area came aboard the steamer "Kansas," accompanied by Brigadier-General Henry Atkinson and their sub-agent,

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 429, 430, 431, 470, 471, 488.



Dr. Edwin James, who had been the surgeon and historian for Long's Expedition in 1819. This group was composed of those who could not make the overland trip from Leavenworth. The group arrived near Bellevue on July 28, 1837; the rest of the tribe was expected soon.<sup>13</sup>

The exact location of the Indians was ascertained by General Atkinson to be fifteen to eighteen miles above the mouth of the Platte River. Though not conclusive evidence, this places their location in what is now Council Bluffs proper. However, more about that later.

On August 8 the steamer "Howard" brought another seventy-five Indians to the encampment. Dr. James at the time expressed his liking for the area directly across from the Platte as a place for the issue house and sub-agency. This would, of course, place it in a convenient location near the main agency at Bellevue. A house and blacksmith shop were also established on the site at the sub-agency. It is interesting to note that the location was given as the "Sub-Agency of Council Bluffs."<sup>14</sup>

These letters and others indicate the first Potawatomi arrived in this area in July, 1837. However, there is some evidence to indicate that some of the tribe was already in the area allotted them, but not necessarily at Council Bluffs. It seems that a Captain Russell removed a large group of the Chicago Indians in 1835, a Mr. Kercheval removed a large body of them in 1836. The question then arises as to whether the

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<sup>13</sup>"Brigadier General Henry Atkinson-Headquarters 1st Department, July 28, 1837," Babbitt, Early Days at Council Bluffs, p. 27.

<sup>14</sup>U. S. Congress, Senate Documents, Edwin James (Sub-Agency of Council Bluffs) - Gen. Wm. Clark, Aug. 11, 1837, 25th Cong., 2d sess., Vol. I, p. 549.

Commissioner of Indian Affairs meant from Indiana or Fort Leavenworth. He went on to add that eight hundred and forty-two had removed themselves in November, 1837 and that a Colonel Sands delivered two hundred and eighty-seven the same fall. In the fall of 1838 a Mr. Berry delivered one hundred and fifty. The report then states that the "Whole number of Ottawas, Chippewas and Pottawattamies removed prior to 1840 (all in the Council Bluffs sub-agency) . . . 2,734."<sup>15</sup>

No other sources indicate such an early arrival of any number of Potawatomi as 1835 or even 1836. Treaties written as late as February, 1838, still stipulated the Potawatomi be removed to an area in Missouri, not Council Bluffs. It would seem possible that the commissioner had mistakenly put figures for groups of Potawatomi moved out of Indiana in with those of Potawatomi being removed from the Platte Purchase to Council Bluffs.

Of the Potawatomi who arrived at the Council Bluffs sub-agency most of them remained in the vicinity of present day Council Bluffs. Only one major group left the immediate area. This band settled on the upper branches of the Nishnabotna. One of the major bands, led by chief Billy Caldwell, located about five hundred of his tribesmen in an area along what is now Broadway just above Main street.

This then is the first sizeable group to locate in the Council Bluffs area and is the first sizeable addition to the population of what is now Council Bluffs proper. The site chosen by the tribe was to become the approximate center of the town built on the location. The

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<sup>15</sup>U. S. Congress, House Documents, Report of Commission of Indian Affairs, 26th Cong., 2d sess., Vol. I, p. 253.

fact that a small fort was built on a point running out from a bluff to overlook the small valley was instrumental in the Indians' decision to locate in the area. The Sioux had decided that they did not want the Potawatomi in the area; and, regardless of the treaty they had signed ceding the land away, it seemed as if they had determined to prevent the emigrants from settling in the area.

The first man, who can be proven to be a white man, to establish a residence on the east side of the river in the Council Bluffs area was Dr. Edwin James. The mysterious Mr. Hart had never been conclusively proven to be Indian or white or even to exist. Dr. James, as sub-agent to the Potawatomi, established his agency building at what was to become Traders Point south of Council Bluffs.

The first white men to live within the borders of Council Bluffs proper were Captain D. B. Moore and his Company 'C' of the 1st Dragoons. While there they constructed the blockhouse around which Billy Caldwell centered his tribal group. Exactly who was at that locale first is unknown, but the Dragoons' stay was brief, even though the blockhouse they built was an outstanding feature of Council Bluffs.

Captain Moore and his men were sent to the Council Bluffs area from Fort Leavenworth to erect a blockhouse for the protection of the Potawatomi from the Sioux. Their orders were to provide protection until the Potawatomi could get situated and erect a blockhouse for their protection and use. They arrived in the area on August 4, 1837, built the blockhouse and departed on November 1, 1837.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>D. B. Moore to Colonel S. W. Kearny, Babbitt, Early Days at Council Bluffs, p. 53.

Details concerning the blockhouse are fairly exact as to its location. Many citizens of early Council Bluffs have agreed that it overlooked what is now east Broadway on a point of land which actually jutted out from a bluff into Broadway and was later graded down to allow the widening of Broadway, and the dirt was used to raise the street. People who saw the blockhouse agreed that it sat in a spot now bounded by Broadway, Grace, Union and Pierce streets.<sup>17</sup>

There their agreement ends. Estimates, from memory, vary on the approximate size of the building. Estimates range from twenty foot square to sixty by twenty-four feet. Descriptions of the blockhouse vary, but most agreed that it was made of whole logs with loop-holes or rifle-ports at intervals. Some also believe that a small sixteen by twenty foot building was erected, perhaps as an officers' quarters. This would seem unlikely considering the brief duration of their stay. Several reported the existence of three buildings, but at least one was constructed by the missionaries who took over the blockhouse at a later date. The third, if there was a third, could have been erected by the missionaries or by the Indians.

Another factor which caused some confusion concerning the blockhouse was that D. C. Bloomer's article on the blockhouse, recorded in 1895 in The Annals of Iowa, contained a number of apparent errors. Those errors were picked up and passed on by later authors such as O. L. Baskin, History of Pottawattamie County, Iowa and Benjamin Gue, History of Iowa.

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 46-47.

Bloomer, who saw the building's remains, in later days, reports that the blockhouse was built in 1839, not 1837, and pictures it as a blockhouse with barracks and officers' quarters, all within a stockade. He also reported he could not determine the officers involved. Apparently Mr. Bloomer was a better lawyer than historian. Though a prominent and leading citizen of early Council Bluffs, many of his accounts seem to be based on legend and tradition, rather than known facts. Among other discrepancies it would seem hard for a company to accomplish such a vast undertaking from August 4 to November 1 or to even have reason to erect so elaborate a structure for what was sure to be only temporary service.

Other disagreements exist. Charles Babbitt wrote or spoke to a number of the area's early settlers seeking information about the blockhouse. Some could not even agree as to the exact block it lay in. H. H. Field wrote it was twenty by twenty. Spencer Smith reported it as three buildings with a stockade. Ephraim Huntington wrote that it had a stockade of upright oak. Reverend Henry DeLong, who came with the Mormons, reported three structures of square-hewn logs, the main building being sixty by twenty-four. One west and south of it was about twenty-four by thirty and used as a chapel by the Catholic missionaries. The third, he felt, was perhaps an officers' quarters; however, there was no stockade, but there were clapboard roofs of excellent construction.<sup>18</sup>

People who saw the building or buildings, but who wrote from

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

memory can find little to agree about. Even the precise location is questioned by a few. Captain Moore's letters and reports provide no answers as to either size or exact location. However, a Mr. H. P. McCain searched the records of the War Department in 1915 or 1916 and reported that the only information he could add was that Moore's orders from Colonel S. W. Kearny were ". . . to throw up a blockhouse of one story about 25 feet square, and with sufficient loop holes . . . ."19

This would correlate with accounts of Father Pierre Jean DeSmet written in 1838. In separate letters Father DeSmet first wrote in July that "we have changed the fort which Colonel Kearney has given us into a church." This would establish that they had taken over the blockhouse since it was the only possible "fort" on the east side of the river in Pottawattamie county. On July 20, 1838, he reported that "We have a fine little chapel, twenty-four feet square." This combined with the account of Captain Moore should conclusively prove to anyone's satisfaction the approximate size and description of the blockhouse. Father DeSmet went on to add that they had four cabins near the fort, donated by Billy Caldwell. They were of rough construction and very leaky, about fourteen feet square.<sup>20</sup>

Some of the confusion among people who supposedly saw the blockhouse at a later date could possibly be explained by one of Father

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<sup>19</sup>"H. P. McCain to Charles H. Babbitt, Jan. 22, 1916," Babbitt, Early Days at Council Bluffs, p. 51.

<sup>20</sup>"Father DeSmet to Reverend Father Superior" and "Nation of the Pottawattamies" July, 1838 and July 20, 1838, Hiram Martin Chittenden and Alfred Talbot Richardson, ed., Life, Letters and Travels of Father Pierre-Jean DeSmet, S. J., Vol. I (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1905) pp. 157-158 and 168.

DeSmet's later reports which indicated that they were enlarging their "church" which had become too small. This, of course, would still not explain accounts of a stout oak palisade. Those accounts must be written off as poor memory or the acceptance of legend and tradition.

While complete information on "Hart's Post" is lacking or clouded by time, the "Old Blockhouse" did exist and can be conclusively shown to have been an important part of Council Bluffs' early history. The construction of the blockhouse at that particular location influenced a large group of Potawatomi to locate up and down the small valley and creek running below the blockhouse. When the Mormons later moved in they settled on lands already partially cleared by the Indians in that area and chose that valley for their center of business. This leads in turn to the construction of the street which was to become known as Broadway, the main east-west street of the city then and now.

The first white family to locate in or about Council Bluffs was that of Davis Hardin. Hardin served under Dr. James as Assistant Indian Farmer. The original farm established by Hardin was only slightly south of the city. Several of his sons remained in the area; one son, Richard, established a farm about twelve miles east of the city in what became Hardin township. William English, a member of Moore's dragoons, came back to Council Bluffs after his enlistment was up and married one of Davis Hardin's daughters. They settled and remained in the area for many years.

Again there is some confusion on the issue. D. C. Bloomer held that Hardin's name was David and that he was the original agent who accompanied the Potawatomi to the area. Bloomer also wrote that he

built the first mill in the area in 1839 or 1840. He believed it was on Mosquito Creek two miles east of the city and that it was built by the government for the Indians. Again the error is perpetuated by O. L. Baskin and others.

The report of Subagent Stephen Cooper in 1841 indicates that the government had not built a mill for the Indians at all. In fact, the Indians were forced to build their own saw and grist mill and were doing a good business.<sup>21</sup>

Charles Babbitt stated that letters on file in the Indian Office showed that the mill was built by Samuel N. Holcomb in 1840 for the Potawatomi at their own expense. The mill was leased to Stutely Wicks and became known by the name of Wick's Mill. Wicks, who lived with the Potawatomi and moved to Kansas with them in 1846, returned in 1854 and purchased the mill from George Scofield.<sup>22</sup>

It was generally accepted that the Potawatomi made little progress while in the Council Bluff's area. Many made no attempt to clear land or make any substantial improvements, particularly after the talks concerning their removal to Kansas began. It should also be pointed out that, aside from Davis Hardin and a blacksmith, no government officials or assistants came to aid the Indians, as the treaties had promised. Yet Dr. Jones' successor, Stephen Cooper, wrote in 1840 that they had large fields, well fenced, and good log cabins in villages

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<sup>21</sup>U. S. Congress, Senate Documents, Report of Subagent Stephen Cooper, 27th Cong., 2d sess., Vol I, October 2, 1841, p. 357.

<sup>22</sup>Babbitt, Early Days at Council Bluffs, p. 31.



scattered from two to fifteen miles from the agency.<sup>23</sup>

However, government treatment of the Potawatomi remained generally poor. Original agreements made by treaties were often forgotten when they required the attention or action of the U.S. government. Complaints made by leading chiefs included the government's failure to provide farmers to assist the Indians in learning the white man's farming techniques (Davis Hardin quit in 1839), to build mills to saw their lumber and grind their grain, to establish schools for their children or to hire teachers for them.<sup>24</sup>

On June 1, 1843, Richard S. Elliott arrived at the Council Bluff's subagency and accepted the papers and effects of the position from Captain J. H. K. Burgwin who had temporarily held the position after Stephen Cooper. Elliott expressed the desire to build a new agency at a more suitable and healthier condition. The old agency was still occupied by ex-agent Cooper who, he felt, would buy the place rather than move. His next letter then indicated that he had removed the agency to Billy Caldwell's village, which would put the agency within the limits of modern Council Bluffs for the first time.<sup>25</sup>

On May 31, 1838, one of Council Bluffs' best known early inhabitants arrived via steamboat from St. Louis. The famous Catholic

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<sup>23</sup>U. S. Congress, Senate Documents, Report of Subagent Stephen Cooper, 26th Cong., 2d sess., Vol I, October 12, 1840, p. 321.

<sup>24</sup>U. S. Congress, Senate Report of Stephen Cooper, Vol. I, October 2, 1841, p. 357.

<sup>25</sup>"Richard S. Elliott to Supt. of Indian Affairs, Council Bluffs Subagency. June 1, 1843 and July 31, 1843," Babbitt, Early Days at Council Bluffs, pp. 37-38.

missionary who became famous for later work among the Flathead Indians, Father DeSmet. Father DeSmet's letters and diary have proven to be an excellent source for the early period of Council Bluff's history, even though his stay in Council Bluffs lasted only two years. Father DeSmet was accompanied by Father Verreydt and Brother Mazelli. They were met at the landing by nearly two thousand Indians dressed in their finest regalia. The sight must have been impressive because Father DeSmet's first impression of the Potawatomi was very good. He placed them far above the Iowa, Sauk and Oto he had seen.<sup>26</sup>

Father DeSmet was quickly brought down to earth when he learned the Indians were not there to meet him, but rather to obtain liquor brought up for traders by the steamboat. Instead of the four or five hundred Catholic converts supposedly there they soon found that even the thirty families of French half-breeds contained only a handful of baptized. Only two would even come forward to shake hands, while the rest were cold or indifferent. As he put it "they cannot even make the sign of the cross nor say a pater or an ave." They were completely ignorant of the "truths" of the white man's religion.<sup>27</sup>

Father DeSmet did not waste time worrying about the situation, but went quickly to work. He had already obtained permission from Colonel Stephen W. Kearny to take charge of the now vacant blockhouse built by Captain Moore's Company. Chief Billy Caldwell gave them possession of three or four cabins near the blockhouse. They soon

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<sup>26</sup>Chittenden and Richardson, ed., Life, Letters and Travels, pp. 157-158.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

changed the blockhouse into a chapel and added a cross on the roof. Father DeSmet began at once to try to instruct the children of various bands spread from five to twenty-five miles apart, trying to reach each village once a week.

Homer H. Field and Joseph R. Reed, History of Pottawattamie County, Iowa, stated the Catholic mission was an overwhelming success. They pictured hundreds of successful conversions among the Indians for Catholicism and a great advance in their level of civilization.<sup>28</sup> Their picture of the mission's glowing successes is the way everyone would like to have had it, a story book ending. Unfortunately the good fellows Mr. Field and Mr. Reed did not read any of Father DeSmet's letters. Considering the fact that Hiram Martin Chittenden's book, Life, Letters and Travels of Father Pierre-Jean DeSmet S. J. 1801-1873, was published in 1905, two years before the publication of their work, it would seem as if they either knew nothing of the book or made no attempt to gain access to or use its material in any way. Even the briefest session with Chittenden's work would quickly have changed their ideas about the success of the mission.

Father DeSmet's first letter after his arrival among the Potawatomi indicated their cold indifference and later letters openly stated the failure of their best efforts to gain large numbers of converts or even to create any great changes among even a few of the "pagan savages."

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<sup>28</sup>Homer H. Fields and Hon. Joseph R. Reed, History of Pottawattamie County, Iowa, (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1907), p. 6.

The greatest enemy of the good priests, and the Indians themselves, was liquor. Supposedly illegal in the Indian trade, it was brought up river in steamboats in large quantities by unscrupulous Indian traders. The Indians would part with their most prized possessions for a cup of the infamous brew. Father DeSmet even reported one squaw who tried to sell her baby for a bottle of "fire-water." Once obtained, regardless of means, the liquor had devastating effects on the Potawatomi. Father DeSmet wrote of violent quarrels, fights, murders, beatings and instances of parents killing their children. Living in perfect harmony in normal circumstances, a load of trader's whiskey caused almost constant fighting among those indulging and everyone around them.<sup>29</sup>

Father DeSmet's successes were limited, only where the group was more removed from the majority of the Indians did he have even limited success. In December of 1839 he wrote:

. . . from the above statement you may easily gather, that our prospects are not so very bright and flattering, surrounded as we are by so many evils and obstacles, which all our efforts to the contrary are not able to stem. The Indians are weak, laws disregarded, money a powerful temptation for the wicked white man and half-breed . . . I would not dare advise anyone to come here. The great profit that there is in the liquor traffic, and the ease with which it can be brought in, throws the dregs of all the states upon us. They flood the country with this veritable scourge of the Indian, and are turning the heads of all of them.<sup>30</sup>

The letter indicated Father DeSmet's growing feeling that it was

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<sup>29</sup>DeSmet - "Most Dear Sir," Dec., 1839, Vol. I., pp. 171-178, and DeSmet - "Father," Dec. 18, 1839, Vol. IV, pp. 1463-1464, Chittenden and Richardson, Life, Letters and Travels.

<sup>30</sup>DeSmet-"Most Dear Sir," Dec., 1839, Chittenden and Richardson, Life, Letters and Travels, Vol. I, pp. 171-178.

too late to help the Potawatomi. He seemed to feel that the more western Indians could be saved, if they were reached before the conniving fur traders could weaken them with trade whiskey. Thus in 1840 Father DeSmet traveled up the Platte River and across the Rocky Mountains and back down the Missouri in search of more fertile grounds for his endeavors. During his travels he met the Flathead tribe to whom he later returned.

Fathers Verreydt and Hoeken had had even less success with the Potawatomi than before. Unprincipled liquor sellers and a threatened Sioux invasion had left them with only about fifty families to care for.<sup>31</sup> Actually, the mission was a failure in every sense of the word. The problems, seemingly, could not be overcome, even by so able a missionary as Father DeSmet. Fathers Verreydt and Hoeken, waiting for reassignment when Father DeSmet left them in early 1841, left that summer. The last entry in the baptismal records of the Council Bluffs mission was dated July 17, 1841.<sup>32</sup>

One could easily believe that Father DeSmet was prone to be overly critical of his own achievements or lack of the same. However, even if we doubt his own words, the facts remain. The mission, opened with great expectations, lasted only three years, May, 1838-July, 1841. It can be safely assumed that Father DeSmet had given up on the mission long before that. His letters and his decision to explore areas in the

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<sup>31</sup>"DeSmet-Mile Chanoine Charles de la Croix, Feb. 4, 1841, St. Louis," Chittenden and Richardson, Life, Letters and Travels, Vol. I, p. 258.

<sup>32</sup>"G. J. Garraghan - Chas. H. Babbitt, May 16, 1916, St. Louis," Babbitt, Early Days at Council Bluffs, p. 51.

far West for more fruitful areas of endeavor indicate that he had given up any hope of success with the Potawatomi by late 1839. He visited the mission only briefly on his return trip in 1841, and found it ready to close its doors, five years before the Indians it was intended to serve departed. Obviously the missionaries and their superiors held little hope of ever succeeding in successfully converting the Potawatomi at Council Bluffs.

It was in connection with a renewed threat by the Sioux to drive out or wipe out the Potawatomi that the United States army again established a post at Council Bluffs. The Potawatomi, faced by a possible invasion by the powerful and fierce Sioux, were attempting to find arms and gain the support of surrounding tribes. A major Indian war was in the making. To prevent the outbreak of such war, and prevent the cost of ending such a war once it started, a force was dispatched from Fort Leavenworth. Captain J. H. K. Burgwin and a company of the First Dragoons arrived in the area in late May, 1842, to protect the Potawatomi and warn the Sioux to abstain from further depredations against them. Due to the presence of the dragoons the peace was preserved a second time.<sup>33</sup>

While in the area the dragoons constructed a military post at first called Camp Fenwick and later renamed Fort Croghan at the recommendation of Captain Burgwin. Records show that they left the area on or about October 6, 1843. Some writers have mistakenly called

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<sup>33</sup>U. S. Congress, Senate Documents, T. Hartley Crawford (War Dept., Office of Indian Affairs) to J. C. Spencer, Sec. of War, 27th Cong., 3d sess., Vol. I, Nov. 16, 1842, p. 387.

it Fort Kearny; this is not so. Kearny's trips to the area were only to punish Indians. He built no posts nor stayed in the area.<sup>34</sup>

According to H. M. Chittenden Fort Croghan was built just north of where the Union Pacific railroad bridge was built. That would put it in what is now the south-western part of Council Bluffs proper, in the area that is now Dodge Park. The exact location of the fort or its remains have never been found. The exact date of the establishment of the fort is not precisely certain either.<sup>35</sup>

The June rise of the Missouri flooded the fort in 1843 and the fort was abandoned. Captain Burgwin was then forced to remove his company to the bluffs at a spot about four miles from the original post. This figure comes from the naturalist James J. Audubon who was on board the American Fur Company steamer "Omega." For some reason, possibly to give the "Omega" crew time to hide the illegal trade whiskey on board during Captain Burgwin's inspection, Audubon traveled a reported four miles with a dragoon to visit Captain Burgwin.<sup>36</sup>

Correlating Audubon's report of four miles with "Omega's" log of May 10, kept by Joseph LaBarge, which put the "Omega" at Hart's Bluffs when summoned by some dragoons to land for inspection would give a starting point. Four miles from the bluffs would put one in the immediate vicinity of the old blockhouse of Captain Moore. Therefore it

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<sup>34</sup>H. P. McCain (War Dept.) - Charles H. Babbitt, Jan. 22, 1916, Wash. D. C., "Babbitt, Early Days at Council Bluffs, p. 51.

<sup>35</sup>Chittenden, The American Fur Trade, Vol. II, p. 950.

<sup>36</sup>Marie R. Audubon, Audubon and His Journals, Zoological and other notes by Elliott Coues, Vol. I, (New York: Dover Publications, 1960), pp. 477-481.

would seem probable that Captain Burgwin had simply moved his men to the old military structure rather than rebuild after the flood.<sup>37</sup>

Audubon also reported Captain Burgwin's dragoons were leaving the post to return to Fort Leavenworth by land on October 6, 1843.<sup>38</sup>

This was the last military group to be located in the area though others passed through the area. The Indians of the area, with the exception of the Sioux and Pawnee, had become too weak to cause serious problems and the army wished to avoid the cost of extra posts, if possible. The Sioux and Pawnee, while still strong, did not range into the vicinity of Council Bluffs regularly and were not considered a major threat to the more peaceful Indians after 1843. Bands of Oto and Omaha, weakened by disease, inhabited the area at times simply because they were no longer strong enough to venture out onto the prairie for fear of meeting roving bands of buffalo hunting Sioux. The agency at Bellevue remained and was a center of attention for the area. Sarpy's post at Trader's Point was still in operation on the east bank. The Potawatomi were soon to leave for Kansas. The door was open to the next group of people to inhabit the area on the east side of the Missouri in the vicinity of Council Bluffs.

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<sup>37</sup>Chittenden, The American Fur Trade, Vol. III, p. 988.

<sup>38</sup>Audubon, Audubon and His Journals, Vol. I, p. 483.



## CHAPTER III

### COMING OF THE MORMONS

1843-1846

Events which at first glance had nothing to do with the growth of Council Bluffs began taking place in 1843. These events created permanent changes in the area as a whole and for Council Bluffs in particular.

The first of these great events took place in a casual manner. In 1842, John C. Fremont led an expedition up the Missouri. This time his goal was to locate an overland route to California. On his return he came down the Platte River Valley. Like Henry Ashley and Thomas Fitzpatrick, who had first taken wagons to the Rockies along the Platte valley route, Fremont recognized its many advantages over the Missouri River route. It avoided the unpredictable Mandan and Aricara, the fierce and sometimes hostile Sioux and the anti-American Blackfeet. The route was not nearly as dangerous, water was less of a problem as well as wood, and, above all, it had far fewer grades. Entrance into the interior of the Rockies in the Green River area was relatively easy, with no great passes to be climbed.

Since Jed Smith had already found the South Pass route to California the Platte valley route would be a logical choice for immigrants from the north who were headed for California or Oregon. Fremont saw this and also the feasibility of a transcontinental railroad

running from somewhere along the borders of Missouri or Iowa to the Pacific along the same route. Even as Fremont returned in 1843 the first great Oregon migration was under way. Up to this time the route was not unknown and was now being put to use by others than fur trappers and traders.

Dale Morgan, Overland In 1846, Diaries and Letters of the California-Oregon Trail, surveyed accounts and diaries of migrants and found that those who chose the Council Bluffs area for their jumping off point in 1844 were fortunate. The trails on the south side of the Platte were drenched with rain and blocked by floods. Meanwhile the Stephen-Townsend-Murphy party traveled rapidly up the north side of the Platte. It was also in 1844 that Caleb Greenwood opened the Truckee River route over Donner Pass. The Oregon-California Trail was being developed and would have been used regardless of the presence or absence of the Mormons. Consequently their use of the route along the north side of the Platte now was to have a great significance.<sup>1</sup>

It was Fremont's report which brought attention to what was to become the major route for those traveling west by land. It attracted the interest of individuals throughout the nation; both public and government interest was aroused. People became conscious of the possibilities of the Platte route. The interest grew and developed in many ways and many places, all of which effected Council Bluffs.

The first significant effect on Council Bluffs was the removal

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<sup>1</sup>Dale L. Morgan, ed., Overland in 1846, Diaries and Letters of the California-Oregon Trail, Vol. I (Georgetown, Calif: Talisman Press, 1963), p. 89.

of the Potawatomi. Thoughtful, forward looking men in the government soon decided that it would be unwise to leave a large Indian reservation so near a direct route to California and Oregon. Therefore, to avoid any possible problems or chances of an expensive Indian uprising, the Potawatomi would have to move, again.

By the "Treaty With the Pottawattamie Nation, 1846" signed by various bands of Chippewa, Ottawa and Potawatomi, the groups included were now to be called the Potawatomi Nation. All annuities and benefits were to be shared in common. This treaty, concluded on June 5, 1846, at the Council Bluffs Agency, prepared the way for the final treaty which was to remove them from the area of Council Bluffs.<sup>2</sup>

On September 5, 1846, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs at St. Louis, Thomas H. Harvey, reported to his superior, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, the final signings of the treaty by which the Potawatomi Nation, including those still on the Osage River, were to exchange their present reservation for a thirty square mile reservation in what is now Kansas. The land lay within what is today Jackson County, Kansas, north and slightly west of Topeka. (One oddity here is that Pottawattamie County abuts Jackson County on the west, but contains no part of the reservation.)<sup>3</sup>

Though the Indians did not have to leave Iowa until July, 1848,

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<sup>2</sup>U. S. Congress, Senate Documents 319, Committee on Indian Affairs, Indian Affairs, Laws and Treaties, ed. by Charles K. Kappler, 5th Cong., 2d sess., (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), p. 557.

<sup>3</sup>Senate Executive Documents (United States Serial Set 493), 29th Congress, 2d sess., Vol. I, "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs," p. 287.

they began crossing the Missouri in large numbers in October, 1847. The Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Thomas H. Harvey, had personally urged them to leave as soon as they received their annuities. Many took his advice and left at once. Others, particularly those around the immediate Council Bluffs vicinity, apparently stayed on. Some remained long after the July, 1848 dateline.<sup>4</sup>

Even as the Potawatomi signed away their claims to the land on which Council Bluffs now stands the next group of settlers were settling in the area. In the same letter reporting the signing of the treaty Thomas Harvey wrote:

There is at this time, and has been for several months, a large number of Mormons (supposed to be 4,000 to 8,000) in the Indian country. They have passed into the Pottawattamie Country at the Council Bluffs. A large number have crossed the Missouri river . . . Another portion of them are desirous to remain next spring on the Boyer river, in Pottawattamie Country; to which they have obtained the consent of the Indians.<sup>5</sup>

To better understand the Mormons arrival at Council Bluffs some of their background must be examined. They had suffered severe persecution for many years for their different, secretive ways and, in some cases, simply because they were successful. They had been driven in turn from Kirtland, Ohio, Far West, Missouri and Nauvoo, Illinois by mobs and so-called state militia.

In Illinois they had built a city called Nauvoo and, under the

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., (United States Serial Set 503), 30th Congress, 1st sess., Vol. I, "Annual Report of the Superintendent of Indians, St. Louis," Oct. 29, 1847, p. 837.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., (United States Serial Set 493), 29th Congress, 2d sess., Vol. I, "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs," p. 287.

leadership of Joseph Smith, had grown rapidly in numbers, Their successes and "unAmerican" ways drew upon them the wrath of their neighbors who used a split among the Mormons themselves to attack Nauvoo. Joseph Smith and his brother were lynched by an anti-Mormon mob and mobs attacked Nauvoo, forcing the Mormons to flee. A temporary truce was finally established to allow the Mormons to depart across the Mississippi. Few were able to really prepare for the exodus, and some were fortunate to get out at all. Speculators gobbled up Mormon farms for next to nothing or for teams, wagons and few supplies. The Saints, as they called themselves, set up a camp at Sugar Creek, opposite Nauvoo and there they tried to prepare for their journey west. Their destination was unknown at that time, in spite of Field and Reeds' assertion that the Salt Lake valley was their goal from the time they left Nauvoo. Their major desire was to move beyond the frontier to an isolated spot where they would be left in peace.

Much speculation has been made about this destination. Earlier authors maintain that the Great Salt Lake Valley was the goal of the Saints from the beginning. Brigham Young, who replaced Joseph Smith, stated in discourses made later in life that representatives of President Polk had asked where the Saints were going to go. Young replied that his representatives were trying to deal with England for Vancouver Island. Others were sailing by the Cape Horn route to California in search of a site.<sup>6</sup>

Many misinterpreted their search for solitude in areas

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<sup>6</sup>Discourses of Brigham Young, Selected and arranged by John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1925), p. 727.

not always belonging to the United States as disloyalty to the government. Young has pointed out that before the expulsion of the Mormons from Nauvoo he had written to all the governors of the states and territories asking for asylum for his people. He was ignored or refused in every instance. After their removal to Iowa his agents went to plead the Mormon case before judges, governors and other officials. Again they were refused. Acceptance of them would probably have been political suicide for a politician in most areas.<sup>7</sup>

By 1845 the Mormons knew only that they must go somewhere. Their hope was for an isolated area and this, logically, took them west, not east. Yet on their departure from Sugar Creek the leaders still had no definite destination in mind, except that Young believed that God had saved them "a good place in the mountains."<sup>8</sup> Henry W. Bigler, a Mormon convert who endured the exodus from Nauvoo, wrote that their destination was unknown, probably an uninhabited place in the little-explored West. "They did not whether they should turn their steps," was the way he put it. They did not know if Oregon and California would become part of the United States. They did not know how they would be treated, if the areas remained in the hands of Spain or Britain.<sup>9</sup>

The Saints did know one thing for certain about their route of travel westward. They would not cross into Missouri where "ruffians" had already run them out and where feelings still ran high among some

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 726.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 738.

<sup>9</sup>Erwin G. Guddle, Bigler's Chronical of the West (Los Angeles: Uni. of Calif. Press, 1962), p. 15.

individuals. Avoidance of contact with other Americans led them to develop a trail along the north side of the Platte River which later proved to be an easier, safer and shorter route than the south side. A petition was sent to the governor of Iowa Territory on February 28, 1846, imploring his protection and influence on their behalf while they passed through or made temporary homes to help those following and raised crops to enable them to proceed on West. No answer was received, but they proceeded without interference.<sup>10</sup>

Their loyalty to the nation was severely tried on many occasions, and would be even more severely tested after their settlement in the Great Salt Lake Valley. Yet in January, 1846, they had sent Jesse Little east as their representative to offer their services to the government. At the time it looked as if a war with England over Oregon was about to break out. Therefore Little offered to contract for the construction of a string of forts and stockades along the overland trail to Oregon. An offer was also made to haul government freight westward or to supply naval stores. Little, as instructed, even offered the services of the Mormons to fight for the country if necessary. This offer was made despite that fact that their largest and most successful foreign missions were in England. Liverpool was the port from which almost all Saints coming to America sailed and most of their mission work was done in England up through the early 1850's. Little's offer was made to President Polk, to the vice-president and to members of the Cabinet and Congress despite those close ties.

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<sup>10</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, Essentials In Church History (13th ed.; Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1953), p. 404.

When approached by the government to raise a battalion of troops to fight the Mexicans, rather than England, they made good on their vows by raising five hundred men in a matter of days in spite of the untimeliness of the call-to-arms.<sup>11</sup>

On March 1, 1846, the leading group of Mormons left Sugar Creek and began their great westward migration. Their route lay as directly across southern Iowa as was possible. They avoided the more populated but established routes across Missouri because of fear of hostile treatment. The dangers from the Indians were preferable to those of the violent Missourians. They traveled slowly, marking out the best route, making bridges and improving the road. They planted crops to be harvested by those coming later and established settlements such as Garden Grove and Mt. Pisgah for use by those caught there by winter or unable to go on because of sickness or other problems. So destitute were they that men were sent into Missouri to quietly trade for or purchase milk cows and oxen, often with money gained by selling jewelry, brooches and wedding rings. Others went as far south as St. Louis looking for work by which money for provisions could be raised and necessary supplies purchased.<sup>12</sup>

After much sickness and many hardships the leading companies of Mormons under Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball and Parley P. Pratt

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<sup>11</sup>William Mulder and H. Russell Mortensen, Among the Mormons, Historic Accounts by Contemporary Observers, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1858), pp. 179-182.

<sup>12</sup>Juanita Brooks, ed., On the Mormon Frontier, the Diary of Hosea Stout 1844-1861 (Utah: Uni. of Utah Press, State Hist. Soc., 1964), p. 15.



reached the Missouri River in the area near the southern edges of Council Bluffs on June 14. After a large council meeting the following day it was determined that they would move back to the bluffs because of lack of a supply of water and because the bluffs offered better protection from the Indians, whose character had not yet been determined. At that time their intentions were to winter somewhere west of the Missouri on the Platte. In order to cross the Missouri in large numbers and in safety they immediately began the construction of a ferry. By June 29 the ferry had begun operations as they moved wagons, people, and stock across the swollen river. Official Mormon records showed an estimated five hundred wagons near the area by that time.<sup>13</sup>

As a cross reference to events and dates the letters of the Indian agents of the area can be used. R. B. Mitchell, sub-agent to the Potawatomi, wrote from the Council Bluffs sub-agency to his superior, Thomas H. Harvey, that five to eight thousand Mormons had arrived at that point about the nineteenth of June. While that date does not agree with that given by the accounts of the Mormons he is in agreement as to the exact date of the opening of the ferry, June 29. He also commented on their good behavior and stated they had already cleared and planted two farms for the poor.<sup>14</sup>

The diary of Appleton Milo Harmon shows that the company of Saints he was with reached the Missouri on June 14. He also stated that

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<sup>13</sup>Smith, Essentials In Church History, pp. 407-408.

<sup>14</sup>O. L. Baskin, History of Pottawattamie County, Iowa (Chicago: O. L. Baskin & Co., Historical Publishers, 1883), p. 19.

"Many of the following arrived the same and next days and camped on the bluffs, . . ." This and other points in his diary seem to indicate that Harmon was in the lead company and he mentions no group preceding theirs. Mr. Harmon also mentions the problem of the flooded lowlands which caused the river to be much wider than normal and the construction of a large flat boat for use as a ferry.<sup>15</sup>

Meanwhile events in the east were taking place which would change the Mormons' plans. Jesse Little had gone to Philadelphia and, while there, gained the aid of Thomas Leiper Kane, brother of Elisha Kane, the Arctic explorer. Kane walked into a mission meeting and, immediately impressed, took Little home and introduced him to his father, who was the attorney-general of Pennsylvania and a close political ally of James K. Polk. The Kanes listened sympathetically to Little and set about gaining him conferences in important circles. In early May Little and Thomas Kane gained a conference with President Polk. Once in the conference they obtained a guarantee of government protection for the Mormons in exchange for a battalion of Mormon troops. It was felt that they would not require much training and, since they were closer, could be organized and moved out much more quickly than any other possible group. Little and Kane left Philadelphia with Polk's orders for Colonel Kearny at Ft. Leavenworth on June 12. Colonel Kearny, upon receiving the orders, dispatched Captain James Allen to find Brigham Young and present the President's request.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Maybelle Harmon Anderson, ed., The Journals of Appleton Milo Harmon (Glendale: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1946), pp. 5-6.

<sup>16</sup>Wallace Stegner, The Gathering of Zion, the Story of the Mormon Trail (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), p. 79.

The exact whereabouts of the Saints was unknown, and so Captain Allen and his escort of three dragoons first rode to Mt. Pisgah. There he met a company of Mormons led by Wilford Woodruff and a General Rich on June 26, 1846. He asked to speak to the group, and they gathered to hear his requisition read. It was met with silence. He then rode off toward the Missouri to locate Young and other Mormon leaders.<sup>17</sup>

On June 30 Captain Allen and his escort rode into the Saints' main camp on the Missouri asking for Brigham Young. Allen's mission was announced to the group as a whole at a meeting held on July 1. He explained that his instructions from Colonel Kearny were to invite the Mormon people to volunteer for service in the United States army for service against Mexico for one year. He requested five hundred men, to be ready in ten days, as Colonel Kearny was already on the march for Santa Fe.<sup>18</sup>

Captain Allen's request for troops placed the Mormons in an almost unbelievable dilemma. Every attempt they had ever made to gain aid, support or protection from any government had been turned down or ignored. State governments had even aided their persecutors on several occasions and had never offered aid or solace. Now, in the time of their deepest trial, the government requested their aid. Why? What trick lay behind it? These were their first thoughts. Most met the Captain's request with open indignation and sullen anger. Many supposed this was a scheme to separate them from their best men who

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 76-78.

<sup>18</sup>Guddle, Bigler's Chronical of the West, pp. 16-17.

could be used as hostages. Quite contrary to this is Field and Reeds' commentary which would have us believe that when the war broke out, the Mormons raised a battalion of troops and tendered its services to the government. This can only be based on legend and certainly is a disruption of the true events. If it were true, the Saints certainly have been unbelievably patriotic people, far beyond the call of duty to a man. The fact that a battalion was raised at all seems to attest to their loyalty.

The diary of Hosea Stout reveals his reaction and the reaction of his company when they first heard the news. Stout was a close associate and an "adopted" son of Brigham Young, a military leader and organizer of the Mormon police who guarded camps and kept the peace while on the trail or in Winter Quarters, yet he reacted as many others did. He recorded in his diary:

We were all very indignant at this requisition and only looked on it as a plot laid to bring trouble on us as a people. For in the event that we did not comply with the requisition we supposed they would now make a protest to denounce us as enemies to our country and if we did comply that they would then have 500 of our men in their power to be destroyed as they had done our leaders at Carthage. I confess that my feelings was uncommonly wrought up against them. This was the universal feeling at Pisgah and Genl Rich sent me word by B. Wright to keep a sharp look out for him as he passed and see that he did not get any knowledge of the public arms which I had. For he supposed that he might be looking after them. Such was our feelings towards the President.<sup>19</sup>

Such were Stout's feelings towards the dragoons, and towards Captain Allen and the government they represented. Thomas Kane, who arrived at the camp on the Missouri shortly after Captain Allen, later

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<sup>19</sup>Mulden, Mortensen and Knopf, Among the Mormons, p. 181.

pointed out that the call for volunteers could not have come at a worse time. Wagon trains were strung out from the Missouri to the Mississippi. Some Saints still lingered in Nauvoo or at Sugar Creek, too ill or too broke to move on. The rainy season, just ending, had caused a great amount of sickness. Even worse, the most likely source of volunteers, the young, unwed men, were gone from the camps, either in pioneer companies or, their faith unannounced, working in northwestern Missouri to raise money and support themselves until emigration began anew. The force had, therefore, to be recruited from married men who would be forced to leave their families, sometimes including several wives, for a year's time in the wilderness. These factors, plus the distrust of the Mormons, worked against the raising of any number of troops.<sup>20</sup>

Kane left out the fact that they were in the middle of Indian country and would have to pass through the lands of the Plains Indians to reach their western mountains. Despite all of these negative aspects of the situation the Mormons soon had a battalion of men ready to go. On July 16, 1846, the battalion was mustered in on the north side of Mosquito Creek, north of where the Iowa School for the Deaf now stands. James Allen then took command as Colonel. On July 21 the battalion took up a line of march for Ft. Leavenworth.<sup>21</sup>

As an interesting side light it might be noted that Council Bluffs saw its first musical band and its first dance the day before the battalion was mustered in. Captain Pitt's Brass Band was one of the

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<sup>20</sup>William Mulder and A. Russell Mortensen, ed., Historic Accounts by Contemporary Observers (New York City: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958), p. 181.

<sup>21</sup>Brooks, ed., On the Mormon Frontier, p. 178.

music loving Mormons' most prized additions. The entire band had been converted in England, traveled to Nauvoo and departed with the leading companies. The Mormons often held great cotillions in which they danced joyously and with abandon, relieving themselves, at least for the moment, of their problems. So great was value placed on the band that when the women had to sell their rings, brooches and other jewelry to raise money for the migration the band kept its instruments, though it might be added that they often played for various groups in Iowa to raise money. They were paid in money, corn, meat, and once with a bucket of honey. Likewise some of its members who had volunteered for the battalion were turned down in order to keep the band intact.

The whole affair involving the raising of the Mormon Battalion is difficult to understand. The real reasons for the rapid acceptance of the President's offer can be only guessed at. Actually the problem is even more complicated than it seems. All records show that Brigham Young was determined that the Mormons would raise the recruits requested. The problem, of course, was that he seemed much more eager than his followers, and much more trusting of the government.

The explanations for this situation are twofold. First, it seems from various accounts that Young had encouraged mistrust and apprehension towards the United States government among his followers, perhaps as a means of gaining greater unity among his followers. Now he would have to quickly convince his followers of their duty to a nation they were not disposed to help in the best of situations.

Secondly, the mass of the Mormons, even his closest followers, such as Hosea Stout, had no idea that the request for volunteers was

the result of Young's offer to aid the government against England. In a private discussion with Hosea Stout he told Stout that the President's request was done as a special favor to the Saints, procured by Jesse Little and Thomas Kane. Had the rest of the Saints known of this their reaction would probably have been somewhat similar to Stout's who wrote in his diary, "This made the matter plain and I was well satisfied for I found there was no trick in it."<sup>22</sup>

Henry Bigler, another Mormon diarist, recorded a somewhat different view of the whole affair, yet the end results are the same. Writing a journal based on pocket diaries he had kept, he wrote his version at a later date and might have mixed in ideas or evidence he actually did not know at that time. Nevertheless his account is well worth adding to the cloudy subject.

Bigler wrote that Jesse Little, as President of the New England Saints, was indeed sent to Washington. However, his assignment was simply to try to reach an understanding with the government about the westward movement of the Saints. The Mexican War broke out before he reached Washington and he was astonished, on his arrival, when he was informed that President Polk had conceived the idea of using the services of two thousand Saints to conquer California. One regiment was to pass overland by way of Santa Fe; and a second was to travel by sea around Cape Horn. Only after repeated conferences was the number reduced to five hundred and Colonel Kearny so informed.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Brooks, ed., On the Mormon Frontier, p. 178.

<sup>23</sup>Guddle, Bigler's Chronical of the West, p. 16.

Bigler added that one of the Saints, no name given, had been sent to Washington as Nauvoo was being deserted. His mission was to offer to freight supplies to the west coast via Cape Horn for the navy. While there the man was closely questioned about the Saints, their loyalty to the nation and what would happen if they were called for a service to the nation. He then commented:

I have always understood that Mr. Benton of Missouri agreed at Washington that the Mormons were disloyal and urged that the Government make a demand on us. There was a plan to call out the military from Kentucky, Missouri, and other places, to cut us off and put a stop to our people going into the wilderness.<sup>24</sup>

Like the other diarists Henry Bigler noted that the rank and file of the Mormons were quite indignant about the request. Yet, even though upset and indignant, Bigler, himself became a member of the Mormon Battalion. The editor, Erwin Guddle, commented, "But as in all totalitarian organizations, they had to obey orders."<sup>25</sup>

Daniel Tyler, another member of the Mormon Battalion, later wrote a similar account of the involvement of Senator Benton and the threat of the use of Missouri militia. Tyler added that it was doubtful if Captain Allen could have raised a single man by his own influence. He also wrote that Captain Allen later stated that he did not blame them for their sentiments toward the government, and under similar circumstances, he felt, he would not have volunteered except to save the country.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 17-18.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>26</sup>Sergeant Daniel Tyler, A Concise History of the Mormon Battalion in the Mexican War, 1846-1848 (Glorieta, New Mexico: The Rio Grande Press, Inc., 1881, Second Printing, 1969), pp. 113-118.



Strangely enough, Young did not explain the situation to his followers. Rather Young and two of his elders, Heber Kimball and Willard Richards set out to gain the needed number of recruits, traveling eastward at least as far as Mt. Pisgah. They pointed out their patriotic duty, threatened to take old men and women and promised even the church elders would be used, if necessary. It seems that the efforts of Jesse Little were never mentioned, but by dint of their great efforts enough men were secured to fill the army's request.

The reasons for what would seem to be a deliberate failure to mention Little's activities to the Mormons is unexplained. Again it should be pointed out that privately Young informed Hosea Stout that it was done as a special favor by President Polk for the Mormons. Little's presence in Washington was as a direct result of Brigham Young's orders.

Why then did Young continue, even years later, to condemn the United States government and omit any mention of Jesse Little or his mission? Why would he write that Senator Thomas H. Benton of Missouri obtained the requisition for Mormon troops? In a discourse written years later Brigham Young himself wrote:

With regard to our going into the wilderness, and our there being called upon to turn out five hundred able-bodied men to go to Mexico, we had then seen every religious and political right trampled under foot by mobocrats; there were none left to defend our rights; we were driven from every right which freemen ought to possess. In forming that battalion of five hundred men, brother Kimball and myself rode day and night, until we had raised the full number of men.

All this we did to prove to the Government that we were loyal. Previous to this, when we left Nauvoo, we knew that they were going to call upon us, . . . Thomas H. Benton, if I have been rightly informed, obtained the requisition to call for that battalion, to call on the militia of Missouri and Iowa, and other states, if necessary, and to call volunteers from

Illinois, from the state we had been driven, to destroy the camp of Israel. This same Mr. Benton said to the President of the United States, in the presence of other persons, 'Sir, they are a pestilential race, and ought to become extinct.'<sup>27</sup>

Brigham Young's failure to ease the minds of his followers is nearly impossible to explain. He states the need to prove their loyalty to the nation. It would seem like his sending Jesse Little to Washington could have been shown as clear proof of loyalty. It would not seem necessary at that point to use fear of the government to convince the Mormons to move West. Their distrust of the government was bad enough without trying to scare them even more with talk of mobs from areas they had been driven out of, mobs which were often titled "state militia." Furthermore, there is no chance that Brigham was misinformed, for Jesse Little and Thomas Kane entered the Saints' camp only a couple of days after Captain Allen, and held a conference with him at once.

Brigham's statement about Thomas Benton, though made sometime after the event occurred, was an accepted idea among the Mormons. Henry Bigler's journal, based on his pocket diary, for June 30 commented:

I have always understood that Mr. Benton of Missouri agreed at Washington that the Mormons were disloyal and urged that the Government make a demand on us, in order to prove our loyalty, and if we failed to comply there was a plan to call out the militia from Kentucky, Missouri, and other places, to cut us off and put a stop to our people going into the wilderness.<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps T. B. H. Stenhouse, author of Rocky Mountain Saints, has the answer to the problem. Stenhouse was no ordinary Saint; he was an elder of the Church for twenty-five years. He was familiar with all

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<sup>27</sup>Widtsoe, Discourses of Brigham Young, pp. 728-734.

<sup>28</sup>Guddle, Bigler's Chronical of the West, p. 17.

the leading apostles and elders. As editor and proprietor of The Salt Lake Daily Telegraph and a church leader he had daily contacts with Brigham Young himself. His book was written to help clarify the Saints' position and thus aid in attaining statehood for Utah.

However, it should be pointed out that Stenhouse had become somewhat less than a full-bore Saint. He felt that if Utah were accepted as a state, with Young's provisions, that Young would have outdone the nation and the laws of the republic. He wrote that he had simply outgrown the past. Stenhouse no longer believed that Young had possession of "a Priesthood that is Infallible"; his assumption that the Mormon Church was the exclusive, true church of Christ and the only passport to Heaven was false.<sup>29</sup>

Stenhouse devoted Chapter XXI to questions involving the raising of the Mormon Battalion. He was fully aware of Little's role in Washington and stressed that Secretary of War W. L. Marcy instructed Colonel Kearny to seek the cooperation of the Saints in taking California. He also wrote to Philip St. George Cooke, who commanded the battalion after Colonel Allen died, in regard to the feelings of the Saints. Cooke, who felt he had good rapport with the Saints of the battalion, stated that he never heard any statements of bad feelings toward the national government, nor did he understand that their services were "demanded" by the President.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>T. B. H. Stenhouse, The Rocky Mountain Saints (Salt Lake City, Utah: Shepard Book Company, 1904), p. xix.

<sup>30</sup>Philip St. George Cooke to T. B. H. Stenhouse, Aug. 17, 1871, Ibid., pp. 236-243.

Stenhouse admits that the Saints first reaction was natural, and further that one apostle had sent word that Thomas H. Benton sought to delay or halt their migration. But the arrival of Little and Kane ended that type of speculation, or should have, if Young had revealed the information they brought. Stenhouse even contacted Mrs. John C. Fremont, Benton's daughter and for many years his private secretary. She informed him that the Senator was falsely accused and did not attempt to hold up the Saints' progress. Stenhouse apparently felt that she was probably correct and that Benton was innocent.

Stenhouse states that:

Of all the preaching in the Tabernacle against the nation, nothing has ever made such an impression upon the people as Brigham Young's story of the Mormon battalion, in which he charges the Government with 'the design of destroying the kingdom of God.'<sup>31</sup>

Young, Stenhouse wrote, asserted without hesitation, unequivocally, time and again, that the government demanded the troops in hopes of causing the Saints to rebel and furnish the government with just cause to "wipe them out of existence." Yet he also states that Young and the apostles secretly resolved to write President Polk and thank him for his "benevolent design" of arming five hundred volunteers and planting them in California to take possession of the country, "and for our good." Several apostles, Stenhouse points out, made statements then and later that the government was "favourably disposed" to the Saints.<sup>32</sup>

Why then the great mystery? Why did Young, for many years

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 237.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 244-248.

thereafter, condemn the raising of those troops as a great national crime? Why not reveal to the people the real truth of the whole affair? Stenhouse himself could only speculate, but his feelings were that until that time the Saints had no strong feelings toward the national government. They saw it was guilty of persecution only by implication, only of not aiding them against the persecution of various state governments. Stenhouse wrote: "These official documents should undeceive the Mormon people and enable them to see how grossly they have been deluded by the story of the Government 'persecution.'"<sup>33</sup>

Again, a number of factors worked against the recruitment of the battalion. The poor timing, lack of readily available young men, wilderness location, need for as many men as possible to build bridges, roads, and homes as well as supply food and drive wagons, etc. Fear of what would happen to a camp without its best five hundred defenders was of deep concern; they were thinking not only of Indians, but also of the possibility of more "mobocrats." There was also the possibility of having the five hundred men held as hostages in some far place by their foes.

Brigham Young and other Mormon elders stressed two points. The first was the question of loyalty; the threat to the Mormons, if they had refused the requisition, was considered to be very real. Also, a step to demonstrate their loyalty to the nation would win protection for them in their western home, wherever that might be. However, Young's greatest concern at that time was money, and that was the one thing that

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 237 and 244.

the battalion could provide that, as individuals, they could not. The agreements worked out in advance included the provision that the men would receive their entire clothing allowance in advance, and that they be allowed to supply their own clothes. Thus, the money could be earned with which to aid the destitute emigrants. The money, sent back to the Mormon camps, could provide the cash to purchase desperately needed supplies, supplies without which the Mormons probably could not go on or even survive the winter.

Gold was a very rare item on the frontier. This fact made the government's promise to pay the men in gold doubly important, so important that John D. Lee and Howard Egan were sent clear to Santa Fe to bring back the first payroll of the Mormon Battalion. Added inducements to the fulfillment of the requisition were that these men would be released from service in California, with their arms to be retained by the men. This is important when it is remembered that the goal of the Mormons was still thought to be California. Such a large force of men, transported there free of cost to the Mormons, could prove to be very valuable in locating a site, developing the land and planting crops in preparation for the coming of the rest of the Mormons. In addition, they were allowed to take about seventy laundresses with the battalion.

Daniel Tyler, writing his account of the Mormon Battalion from memory, recorded that seven young Mormon boys were accepted as officers' servants for the trip. In addition thirty-one wives of officers were allowed to accompany the battalion, and all but the commanding officers were from the Saints' ranks. The women also brought along about forty

children. The moving of seventy-eight dependents at little expense was an extra added bonus.<sup>34</sup>

Brigham stated in 1848 that, though the raising of the battalion surprised many people, it was the "temporal salvation of our camp." It had proved to be a great weapon against their enemies and had prevented them from further harassment. At the same time it had enabled the purchase of desperately needed supplies. In short, it had served as a great blessing to the camp.<sup>35</sup>

It is interesting to note the anticipated presence of the Saints at the Bluffs did, in a small way, have an adverse effect on other groups who might have used the area. Many articles appeared in Missouri newspapers about the best route to the West. A representative article on the Council Bluffs route appeared in the St. Louis Gazette on March 13, 1846; it was written by a Stephen Cooper. He recommended crossing the Missouri at the Council Bluffs because the route up the north side of the Platte was by far the best; its streams were all fordable by loaded wagons. His group was preparing to leave from Atchinson County and was to meet another group from Dubuque at the Council Bluffs on May 1. He had even arranged for ferry service, presumably with Peter Sarpy, and encouraged all who desired to join them at that point.<sup>36</sup>

However, later newspaper editions carry a different type of story. One person reported to the St. Louis Missouri Republican, May

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<sup>34</sup>Tyler, History of the Mormon Battalion, pp. 125-126.

<sup>35</sup>Guddle, Bigler's Chronical of the West, p. 18.

<sup>36</sup>Dale L. Morgan, Overland in 1846, Diaries and Letters of the California-Oregon Trail, Vol. II (Georgetown, Calif.: Talisman Press, 1963), p. 489.

27 issue, from Weston, that he had visited all of the camps from "Iowa Point to St. Joseph" wherever there were ferries from "the Bluffs to St. Louis." He reported great excitement in the camps over two rumors. The first was that the Sioux were moving against the Pawnee in large numbers and so some had crossed the Missouri at the Nishnabotna in order to avoid them. But of more concern was the rumor that large bodies of well-armed Mormons were on the move and were believed to be intending to cross at the Council Bluffs.<sup>37</sup>

The concern over the Mormons was widespread among Missourians. Letters of inquiry about them, their numbers and whereabouts poured into the Missouri papers. On June 5 the St. Louis Weekly American contributed to their anxiety by publishing a false report of a clash between a Missouri party and the Mormons, in which several Missourians were supposedly killed. Other parties were rumored to have been threatened by the Saints. The story was attacked by the St. Louis Missouri Republican the following day as a hoax, but the damage was done.<sup>38</sup>

Dale Morgan asserts that the presence of the Saints prevented people from using the Council Bluffs as a major jump off in 1846. No one knew for sure where they were going or how they would treat Gentiles they met up with in the wilderness. Subsequently, as Morgan put it:

Everybody was disposed to give them elbow room, so that for the first time since 1843 no California or Oregon-bound company undertook to cross the Missouri at the Council Bluffs and go

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<sup>37</sup>Cited in Ibid., p. 535.

<sup>38</sup>Cited in Ibid., pp. 549-550.



west by the trail north of the Platte.<sup>39</sup>

What was true in 1846 was also true in 1847 and 1848 when they knew positively where the Saints were and which route they would take. This factor undoubtedly delayed the establishment of the Council Bluffs as a frontier jump-off point for non-Mormons. It is not until the spring of 1848 that non-Mormons arrive to begin businesses, knowing that many Saints were leaving the area. Whether or not they would have arrived sooner, if the Mormons had not been present, is only a matter of conjecture. Certainly Council Bluffs gained more from their presence than it lost.

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., Vol. I, p. 89.

## CHAPTER IV

### MILLER'S HOLLOW, 1846-1848

The raising of the battalion had extremely important effects on Council Bluffs. Until that time the site was only to be another rest stop on the path westward. Although its location on the Missouri would have probably made it more important than Mt. Pisgah or Garden Grove it never would have contained any significant number of Mormon settlers on a permanent basis.

After the battalion was raised the plans of the Mormon elders had to be changed. All of the necessary work preparatory to moving on across the Missouri and into the wilderness could not be accomplished due to the shortage of men. Now they would have to find a temporary site on which to locate in order to build up their provisions and winter over. Milo Harmon stated that they were unable to cross the river until early August, by which time the season was so far advanced, so many were sick and so many of the most effective men were gone, that it was thought best to locate along the Missouri for the winter.<sup>1</sup>

Regardless of which side of the river they located on they were going to be on land acknowledged by the government as belonging to a specific tribal group. The problem on the east bank was much simpler to solve. The Potawatomi, who were still in the area, proved to be very friendly with the Mormons and the relationship between the two groups

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<sup>1</sup>Anderson, The Journals of Appleton Milo Harmon, p. 7.

was, from the first, excellent. Captain Allen had secured permission from the Potawatomi for the Mormons to remain in their country for an unspecified amount of time. The Potawatomi were rather sympathetic toward the Mormons, seeing them as mistreated by the government and harassed by other white men much as they had been. Also the Saints were one group who did not ply the Indians with liquor or make advances on their maidens.

Thomas Kane wrote that there was open hospitality on the part of the Indians, partially because the Mormons had treated them well. One Pied Riche, an interpreter and chief, and numerous half-breeds, were especially friendly. He then spoke of a large council held at Peter Sarpy's post at Trader's Point. In this council Pied Riche stated that the Potawatomi had suffered, been driven from their land and homes, as had the Mormons. He expressed the hope that the two groups could cooperate and exist in harmony. He then extended an important offer to the Saints. He offered to allow them to locate and build homes on any land not occupied by the Indians; furthermore, they were to feel free to cut the wood necessary for building shelters and homes, as well as heating and cooking.<sup>2</sup>

This agreement opened the way for the eventual settlement of large numbers of Mormons on the east bank of the river. These settlers, some of whom were permanent, established the village which was eventually to become the city of Council Bluffs. Land was cleared and farms built by Mormons as far north as the Boyer River and eastward for some distance.

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<sup>2</sup>Mulden and Mortensen, Among the Mormons, pp. 210-211.

On the west bank of the river conditions were tremendously different. On August 31, 1846, the Mormon leaders counceled with the chiefs of the Omaha nation, led by Big Elk and his son, Standing Elk. The Mormons agreed to help the Indians haul corn, learn agricultural techniques, supply mechanics and aid in constructing log cabins. In return the Mormons were to be allowed to stay on Omaha land as long as they desired. The chiefs promised them the full use of timber and grass, that they would not be molested and that their stock would not be bothered. The Indians did state that they did not want the Mormons to hunt deer or elk as the supply would never last for so large a number of people. Brigham Young assured the Indians that he had full permission from the government to establish winter quarters in Omaha country. Actually he had only the permission of Captain Allen, who had now gone and had, in fact, died, at Fort Leavenworth.<sup>3</sup>

Actually the Mormons had already begun to move across the river on July 31, a full month before they wrote the treaty with the Omaha. Their first location was known as Cutler's Park and was on a ridge at some distance from the river. The final location for Winter Quarters was decided on September 17 and laid out by the 24. It was on a level flat about a mile long on the second bluff above the river about fifty feet above the water, but about three miles nearer the river than Cutler's Park. The site had springs at both ends for water. The location is actually in what was to become Florence, Nebraska, and is now enclosed in the northern area of Omaha.

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<sup>3</sup>Brooks, ed., On the Mormon Frontier, pp. 188-190.

Winter Quarters was soon laid out and the majority of the Mormons moved to that site. At one time there were said to be as high as seven thousand people living there. The population recorded for December 24, 1846, was 3,483. Estimates on the number of houses run as high as seven hundred, though this might include dugouts and tents. Four hundred houses had been raised within six weeks, yet some spent the winter in their wagons. Houses were hastily constructed as rapidly as the logs could be brought in. Many lived through the harsh winter of 1846-47 in tents and few had really adequate shelter, partially because timber was scarce. Consequently, illness was widespread and many deaths occurred.

The idea to stay at Winter Quarters for a year or so and send out a hand-picked company of men to go over the Bear River valley and establish a home for the Mormons was recommended by Young on September 9. The camp had begun to take on the airs of permanence already. Hosea Stout, as instructed by the elders, had formed a police force which was responsible for police functions within the camp, to protect against fires and do guard duty to prevent Indians from stealing their stock. This organization was also the basis for a military-like organization in which every man was enrolled.<sup>4</sup>

Their troubles in some areas solved, the Saints were soon faced by others. In the late summer and through the fall disease ran rampant through the ranks. Weakened by travel and work, ill fed, poorly sheltered and crowded together, the fever claimed many a Mormon soul.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 190-193.

At the camp of the pioneer group on the Elk Horn River at least a third were ill of a "scorbutic" disease which they called "Black Canker" and many died. Camps on the east side were no better off. At one time so many were ill at Winter Quarters that cows were not being milked and burials lagged far behind. As late as December 24, Hosca Stout's rolls showed over one-tenth of the camp's inhabitants were ill.

Other problems simmered and brewed in other areas. Though the Bureau of Indian Affairs had first instructed its agents to refrain from harassing the Mormons, their attitude soon changed. When it was ascertained that the Mormons were not just passing through an entirely different situation was created. As early as September 16 Peter Sarpy warned the Mormons of the approach of United States marshalls from Missouri; they were supposedly detailed to arrest "the twelve" or church council, for illegally trespassing in Indian territory. Someone reported seeing dragoon horses on the 17. Nothing came of either rumor, except that the Saints completed their military organization, including their artillery unit.<sup>5</sup>

In late November Major Thomas Harvey, Superintendent of Indian Affairs called upon Brigham Young from St. Louis and requested that he leave Indian territory at once. It seems that Captain Allen was given no authority by anyone to allow the Mormons to establish any permanent base in Indian territory. No white men were supposed to be allowed that privilege, even if agreeable to the Indians, by act of Congress. The Mormons, Harvey stated, had permission to stay on Potawatomi lands and

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 194.

no other. Both were awaiting word from President Polk, to whom Captain Allen had supposedly appealed.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, Harvey did not trust Young's vow that the Mormons did not intend to stay more than two years. He wrote to his superior that the camp was extremely elaborate for a temporary base, including a nearly complete water-powered mill. He estimated the total population at near ten thousand, about three times the actual figure. In addition he pointed out that groups were locating in other spots in the Indian territory, on the Elk Horn and in Ponca country on the Niobrara. Besides, he stated, that for a winter camp, the Mormons chose a very poor site.<sup>7</sup>

However, the Saints could not possibly move from Winter Quarters and establish another quarters at that late date and hope to survive the winter. Their agents in the east, with aid from Thomas Kane's father, secured a reprieve. It was not until early 1848 that the Mormons were ordered out of Winter Quarters. Yet Harvey continued to work against them. Apparently he went so far as to cut the annuities of the Potawatomi who were successfully converted to Mormonism and fired a Mr. Case, an agent, for the same reason. The Mormons felt his actions were inspired by influential enemies in Missouri, by which they probably meant their "dear old friend," Thomas H. Benton.

Meanwhile other problems of just as serious a nature had arisen.

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<sup>6</sup>"Thomas H. Harvey, Supt. of Indian Affairs - William Medill, Comm. of Indian Affairs," Oscar Osburn Winther, ed., The Private Papers and Diary of Thomas Leiper Kane A Friend of the Mormons (San Francisco: Gelber-Lilienthal, Inc., 1937), pp. 25-27.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 25-27.

As early as mid-October Young spoke to his followers on the problems caused by the Omaha, particularly in regard to the stealing of cattle. They were advised to keep them out of the camp and use whips if necessary. Food was not to be given them nor were they to be encouraged in anyway to enter the camp. Logan Fontenelle, the Omaha's interpreter, had advised them to stop selling dogs to the Omaha because the Indians were trying to get them out of camp so they could no longer alert the Mormons of their presence. On October 24 Brigham spoke to Big Elk about the killing of Mormon cattle and was informed that the chief had lost all control over the younger braves. He advised Young to establish regular sentries and put the most valuable animals on pickets to prevent straying.<sup>8</sup>

The diaries of Hosea Stout, J. D. Lee and Milo Appleton Harmon, as well as the later writings of Thomas Kane, indicate that the problem became even worse. The Omaha continued to steal cattle and had a regular slaughter house established near "Rush Bottoms" where the cattle were wintered, near present day Tekamah, Nebraska. The Indian agent proved of no value, his power over the Indians was nil for they collected no annuities from the government. In fact, that was one reason used by the Omaha as reason for the raids. Kane wrote that he felt they would completely destroy the cattle herd, even if they could not storm the camp itself. The damage done was extensive, though no estimates of the total number of horses, mules, oxen and cattle taken exist. The loss was great enough to prevent many people from leaving

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<sup>8</sup>Brooks, ed., On the Mormon Frontier, pp. 205-206.



for the Great Salt Lake in 1847 and 1848, thus delaying their reaching their new homes. Some were forced to move back to the east bank when Winter Quarters closed simply because they lacked the draft animals to pull their wagons.

It is probably fortunate for the Mormons that the Omaha were not more aggressive than they were. Other, more aggressive tribes, caused greater fears of actual loss of life. Pawnee ambushed one herder and stole numerous horses. The Iowa attacked an Omaha village within the sight of the Mormon Camp and Sioux warriors wiped out the Omaha camp near the Rush Bottoms. All of these tribes were seen around the Mormon camps. At times young warriors or boys were seen practicing their stalking on Mormon herdsmen, riders and hunters, all of which did little to sooth the nerves of the beleaguered Mormons.

The winter of 1846-47 was the toughest trial the Mormons underwent. Disease, Indians, lack of shelter, insufficient food, severe cold, insufficient wood for heating and clothing worn thin by time and travel all gathered together to cause the most extreme privations. The money sent by the "Mormon Battalion" in August and again in November was the thing that carried many through the winter. It was used to purchase supplies at wholesale prices in St. Louis. Over the complaints of families whose men were in the battalion, much of the money was used for the good of the entire camp and helped see them through. That winter was the turning point, scourged by every possible malady and hardship, the tide began to turn in 1847. Those who lived through the winter to the spring of 1847 saw the arrival of better times.

The really sad part of this is that it need not have happened.

The only possible arguments for moving across the river to establish Winter Quarters were for defense and to cross the Missouri ahead of time. However, any foe could have crossed the river easily before reaching Winter Quarters, and there was no problem with Iowans. Since they had ferries anyway, the June rise of the Missouri should not have presented serious problems, moreover, they would certainly attempt to be on the trail west before June anyway.

An encampment placed on the east side of the river would have solved or prevented many of the hardships and trials of Winter Quarters. If for nothing else, they could have begun constructing housing and shelter at least a month earlier. This would have given them time to perhaps get everyone inside, out of the weather. Some could have purchased cabins of the Potawatomi who were in the process of leaving for Kansas. Fewer men would have been needed for guard and picket duty because the Potawatomi were neither hostile nor were they thieves, thus allowing more men for building cabins or for securing supplies in Missouri.

Thomas Kane spoke of the amiable nature of the Potawatomi and of their good relationships with the Mormons. He wrote:

They had no camp or settlement of equal size in the Pottawattamie country. There was less to apprehend here from Indian invasion; and the people scattered themselves, therefore, along the rivers and streams, and in the timbered groves, wherever they found inviting localities for farming operations.<sup>9</sup>

Not needing to group together within a stockade, they located in small groups at scattered places. Apparently they did not fear the

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<sup>9</sup>Mulden and Mortensen, Among the Mormons, pp. 210-213.

arrival of other opponents or adversaries. This alone would have helped reduce the amount of disease, simply due to less contact and better sanitary conditions.

Even their detractors wondered why they crossed the river to winter. Thomas Harvey, who created problems for them because of their presence in Indian territory, informed the Indian Affairs commissioner that the site of their Winter Quarters was a poor one. The camp was on the prairie and faced northward; also, there was little good grazing in the area. The east side of the river, he felt, held bottom timber for lumber and fuel and served to break the force of the howling winter winds from the north. The eastern site would have provided better grazing and allowed them to move out of the wind. Besides these there was the advantage of fewer and much friendlier Indians.<sup>10</sup>

So it would seem that the Iowa side of the river held many advantages over the western bank. Also it would seem that the Mormon leaders would have seen the advantages of the Iowa side. Like the raising of the "Mormon Battalion," no answers are given, nor are any readily apparent.

However, if an inquirer happened to be of a rather suspicious nature, he might see some similarity between the two incidents. Could the failure of Brigham Young to mention the activities or assignment of Jesse Little, like his failure to have his camp on the Iowa shores of the river, have had the common goal of maintaining within the ranks of his followers enough fearfulness to make it easy to draw them

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<sup>10</sup>Winther, The Private Papers of Kane, pp. 27-28.

together under strict discipline? Certainly it was easier in both cases to get people to obey than had it been otherwise. Perhaps Young did not want a series of scattered camps, a situation in which his power of control would be somewhat, if not greatly, weakened. T. H. B. Stenhouse's conclusion would certainly support such an idea.

While Brigham's followers at Winter Quarters were having such difficulties, as have been mentioned, those on the eastern bank began to settle down also. Why some of the Saints chose to stay in Iowa when the majority of the brethren had crossed is unclear. It is very possible that they simply recognized the advantages of that side of the river. They established not one, but a number of different villages as they reached the area over the next couple of years. Some estimates range up to thirteen different, but identifiable groups. Farms were begun as far north as the Boyer River and one group located on Keg Creek, to the east of Council Bluffs.

For these people the scene was much quieter than that across the river. They had no fear of the Indians, the Potawatomi being much more inclined to sympathize with them. Though they too suffered from diseases in 1846, they suffered less. Less crowded, they had access to sufficient water and polluted their own water to a lesser degree. They neither stood guard nor picket duty, and their stock had plentiful graze. Timber was sufficient to meet all their needs. Accurate information is hard to find on these people. None of the elders of the church remained in the area. The Saints scattered condition and lack of need for police or military units led to much looser organizations for governmental purposes.

Yet, this is the beginning of the growth of Council Bluffs. It is during this period that Council Bluffs is transformed from the status of a trading post and Indian sub-agency to that of an actual village, a center of civilization. A settlement which, in less than five years, would rival any point on the Missouri River as an outfitting post. Despite the fact that the bulk of the Mormon population elected to settle on the west side of the Missouri, it was Council Bluffs which would most benefit from their presence. Heretofore, the west bank had always been the center of action because, in fact, it was closer to the Indians. Now Council Bluffs would prosper above Winter Quarters because it was more removed from the Indians. The Potawatomi had to move out by 1848.

In the next few years the Mormons defined the route up the north side of the Platte; they were not the first to use it, but they changed it from a route to a road. They bridged the streams, built ferries, dug down stream banks at crossings, established mileposts and campsites, built relay points, made trail markers and even published guide books. While all of this was basically designed to aid more Saints to reach the valley of the Great Salt Lake, the improvements also aided untold numbers of Gentiles who headed for California, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Montana, Colorado, Utah and Wyoming beginning in 1849 and continued to flow over the Mormon Trail until the Union Pacific Railroad was established along the same basic route.

It is well recognized that the city of Council Bluffs was earlier known as Kanesville. But few know that it was first known as Miller's Hollow. When the advance company of the Latter Day Saints

reached the Missouri River in 1846, the entire Mormon train was held up. When the ferries were built most of them followed their leaders across the river. Some chose to remain on the east bank of the river and had already begun to seek sites on which they could construct shelters for the winter and plant some fall crops, probably winter wheat. Among the advance group were two brothers, George and Henry Miller. George was a Bishop in the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints and faithfully crossed the river to Winter Quarters when the call came. Meanwhile Henry W. Miller settled in what was to become known as Miller's Hollow. Miller's Hollow was located slightly below, to the west, of the old blockhouse. The village which formed at Miller's Hollow became the center of what was to become Council Bluffs.<sup>11</sup>

Henry William Miller, the founder of Miller's Hollow, was a proven veteran of the Latter Day Saints Church. He was born in 1807 in Green county, New York of James G. Miller and Ruth Arnold. By profession he was a carpenter, a skill which he put to work on several important tasks for the Saints. After marrying and moving to Illinois, he was converted to Mormonism and moved to their center at Nauvoo. While there he helped build the Nauvoo House and Nauvoo Temple. After founding Miller's Hollow he left for the Great Basin in 1852, crossing the plains as captain of a Mormon company. After carrying out a mission to the Cherokee he led a Mormon train to the valley in 1862.

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<sup>11</sup>"Latter Day Saints Historians Office to C. Babbitt," Salt Lake City, Charles H. Babbitt, Early Days at Council Bluffs (Washington, D. C.: Press of Byron S. Adams, 1916), p. 83.

In 1863 he was chosen to begin a Mormon settlement at Beaver Dams on the Virgin River in what is now Nevada. He died in 1885.<sup>12</sup>

The first settlers of Miller's Hollow simply purchased Indian cabins belonging to Billy Caldwell's tribal group; it was thought the stay was to be temporary and it was late in the season. This was simple and quick, especially since the Indians were about to depart anyway. The idea of purchasing the site seems to have been Miller's though the Saints' leaders made the decision to locate such a village on the east bank. The Mormons' Journal History for "July 17, 1846" states that Brigham Young and most of the Saints' leaders set out to discover the site of Indian village near the Bluffs. They were met and guided by Henry Miller who showed them the entire area. Shortly thereafter Miller purchased the site of the entire Indian settlement, with improvements.<sup>13</sup>

The site seems to have been well-timbered and well-sheltered from winter winds. Though good grazing grass was not found in the hollow itself, it was plentiful on the river bottom immediately to the west of the little village. It also seems they were able to purchase small plots of cleared land with the cabins. A few fresh vegetables, a patch of corn, or a little spring wheat were great prizes. In fact, Miller provided a feast for two of the apostles of green corn, cucumbers, succotash and musk melons in August, and even sent a load

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<sup>12</sup>Andrew Jensen, ed., Latter Day Saints Biographical Encyclopedia, Vol. III, Salt Lake City, 1901-1936, p. 165.

<sup>13</sup>"Kanesville, Pottawattamie Co. Iowa. History," (an unpublished manuscript of The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints Archives at Salt Lake City), p. 1.

of melons across the river for the ill.

The little village must have prospered quickly. It rapidly established itself as the major center of population on the east side of the river. Determination of its number of citizens at an early date is most difficult, if not impossible. Rough estimates are the best that can be done. Thomas Kane estimated the entire population of Mormons settled on the east of the river as about seven hundred and fifty, with one hundred more on Keg Creek. How many of these actually resided in Miller's Hollow is unknown, but it was probably between one hundred and two hundred people in late 1846.<sup>14</sup>

The first organized government for the area in and around Miller's Hollow was, of course, associated with the Mormons. In fact, it was created and run by Mormons. The Journal History of the Mormon Church reveals that a High Council was organized at Council Point (Trader's Point) just south of Council Bluffs on July 21, 1846. This actually is before Miller's Hollow was established. The purpose of the council was to exercise power over spiritual and worldly affairs for the camp and for others to arrive from Nauvoo. The original council elected included Isaac Morley, George Harris, James Allred, Thomas Grover, Phineas Richards, Heman Hyde, Andrew Perkins, William Perkins, Henry Miller, Daniel Spencer, Jonathan Hale and John Murdock. However, the personnel of the council changed frequently as companies departed for Salt Lake City. After Pottawattamie County was organized the High

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<sup>14</sup>Thomas Kane to "Dear Sir," 1846, O. O. Winther, The Private Papers of and Diary of Thomas Leiper Kane, pp. 30-32.



Council jurisdiction was, technically, confined to religious affairs.<sup>15</sup>

It is interesting to note the presence of Henry Miller on the list. It is he who begins Miller's Hollow and to which the area as a whole began to polarize. The village became the center of the Saints' activities in the area.

In 1847 Miller's Hollow prospered and grew primarily because the Saints had not moved on west, as were their original intentions. The long, harsh winter had wiped out their supplies of almost everything; many were lucky to find food at all and even the church stores meant for the trip were severely depleted. Sickness, cold, hunger and suffering had exhausted the people. Many of their cattle, horses and mules were gone, the victims of winter, or more than likely, the Indians. A continuation of the mass migration was impossible.

The Saints needed time, time to replenish supplies, acquire stock, replace worn clothing and regain their strength and health. So it was the Quorum of the Twelve, the Saints' leaders, decided to send out only a pioneering group to the westward to seek the new Zion. And so a hand picked body of one hundred and forty-three men, three women and two children set out in seventy-three wagons with the best of the teams that survived the winter, led by Brigham Young himself. William Clayton related that they were forced to use forty-six oxen, despite their lack of speed, as they were all that was available.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>L. D. S. Historian's Office to Charles Babbitt, Dec. 24, 1915, Babbitt, Early Days at Council Bluffs, p. 82.

<sup>16</sup>Clayton Family Association, ed., William Clayton's Journal (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News, 1921), pp. 75-77.

Departing from Winter Quarters in early April, their purpose was to find a secluded spot in the wilderness, a retreat in the mountains. The pioneer group was to blaze the way, mark the trail and find a resting place where the Saints of the world could retreat and live in peace. They were to clear land and plant crops so they and later arriving Saints could eat.<sup>17</sup>

Miller's Hollow profited greatly from this decision. Though the leaders had said that those who could be provisioned should come if possible, few expected to leave in 1847. So the residents of Miller's Hollow now realized their stay would be prolonged for at least one year and maybe more. Now it was time to improve their homes and think about planting crops, setting up farms, mills and other basic businesses. Sheds to store grain and corrals for cattle and horses were needed.

Secondly, incoming groups of Saints would, if anything, be in even poorer positions to go on west than those at Winter Quarters and Miller's Hollow. In the first place, if they had had good stock, wagons and supplies, they would not have been among the stragglers. As these people arrived it seemed as if a large proportion of them settled on the east side of the river. The record of Winter Quarters was not one which would encourage newcomers to locate on the west side. Furthermore, farming there would be nearly impossible. The advantages of the Iowa side were clearly understood.

On top of other considerations it was probably known that the Indian Affairs office was trying to move the Saints from Indian

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<sup>17</sup>Anderson, The Journals of Appleton Miles Harmon, p. 11.

territory. Thomas Kane was informed as early as April 24 that their request for permission to remain in Indian territory had been denied. They had problems with disease, Indians and lack of control all summer especially at the farm of Young, known as Summer Quarters. Dissension had broken out soon after Young left. Why would anyone wish to establish at Winter Quarters and then be forced to move? Again it would seem that the Iowa Mormon centers, Miller's Hollow among them, probably gained more attention because of the discouraging conditions across the river. Population estimates for 1847 could only be speculation, but a population of nearly one thousand people in the Miller's Hollow area by late 1847 would not be unrealistic.

While Miller's Hollow was busily growing in 1847, Winter Quarters waited for word of the pioneer group and the Mormon Battalion. In early October passers-through from the West brought word that the pioneers had established a city in the valley of the Great Salt Lake and were in the process of planting some crops and laying out a city. On October 21, 1847, William Clayton and his group of fifty returned to Winter Quarters from Salt Lake City. He reported the distance to be one thousand and thirty-two miles. Unfortunately they found many people in Winter Quarters ill, including one of Clayton's wives and a child who were critical. Many had died and provisions were short.<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile the government was putting into motion the machinery which would lead to eviction of the Saints from Winter Quarters. On April 24, 1847, William Medill, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, informed

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<sup>18</sup>Clayton Family Association, ed., William Clayton Journal, p. 376.

his superior, Secretary of War, W. L. Marcy that, in his opinion, the Mormon camp on the west bank of the Missouri was clearly a violation of the Indian Intercourse Act of June 30, 1834. He felt that the executive department had stretched the law to the fullest extent by even allowing a temporary stay. Earlier Oregon bound immigrants had been refused permission to do what the Saints were now doing. He did not feel the Mormons should be accorded special favors. The law, he pointed out, was specific in that no white men were to settle in anyway on land given to or retained by the Indians in treaties. The President was empowered by the act to remove such settlers by force, if necessary.<sup>19</sup>

Oddly enough, on the same day Thomas Kane wrote to Medill of having received his refusal of formal permission to remain in Indian territory, he asked if the War Department intended to remove them by force, and if the Saints would be given a deadline? He also requested that his letters on the matter and a copy of Medill's report be sent to President Polk.<sup>20</sup>

The Omaha and the United States government finally had their way. On November 9 and 10 the Council discussed the issue of evacuation. Their decision, as recorded by Hosea Stout, was to remove all those who could depart for Salt Lake Valley in the spring. Those who could not raise provisions and teams to go west were to vacate Winter Quarters and remove to the east bank. The subject was laid before the

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<sup>19</sup>"William Medill, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, - W. L. Marcy, Secretary of War, Apr. 24, 1847 (War Dept.)," Winther, The Private Papers of Kane, pp. 39-40.

<sup>20</sup>"Thomas Kane - William Medill, Philadelphia, Apr. 29, 1847," Ibid., pp. 37-38.

people at a general meeting held on November 14 and agreed to.<sup>21</sup>

After the return of Brigham Young from their newly found home in the Great Basin, a statement entitled "Second General Epistle-to the Saints throughout the Earth" was issued. There is some divergence in opinion as to who actually wrote or was responsible for the epistle and also as to the exact date it was issued. Wallace Stegner, The Gathering of Zion, the Story of the Mormon Trail, dates the letter December 5, 1847, and places responsibility for the letter squarely, and solely, on Brigham Young. Stegner writes that Young was by then "President of the Twelve, Prophet, Seer and Revelator." Apparently Stegner is wrong on both counts.

Frederick H. Piercy's diary, as edited by Fawn M. Brodie, indicates that the letter was not issued until the 23. Furthermore he states that Young did not hold the position of First President until the end of the conference which was readjourned on the 24. The letter was issued by the twelve apostles, not just Brigham Young, according to Piercy's account.<sup>22</sup>

Piercy's description of the event is, seemingly, correct. Piercy's accounts are completely supported by Joseph Fielding Smith, who, as the official historian for the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, wrote Essentials In Church History which was based on the records of the Saints. His account states that the epistle was

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<sup>21</sup>Brooks, Ed., On the Mormon Frontier, pp. 287-288.

<sup>22</sup>Frederick Hawkins Piercy, Route From Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley, ed. by Fawn M. Brodie (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard Uni. Press, 1962), p. 114.

issued on the 23 and that it was issued by the Apostles, not just Brigham Young. The epistle uses the word "we" in commands, never "I." His account confirms that Brigham Young was not, at that time First President, at least in title.<sup>23</sup>

The truth is that even a seemingly unquestionable source like Joseph Fielding Smith can be in error. The Journal History of the Saints states that the council assembled at Elder Orson Hyde's residence in the evening of December 5. After remarks by half a dozen well-known Mormon leaders Young was unanimously elected to be President of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints. His chosen counselors were Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards. Nothing of the epistle in question is alluded to. If sent out earlier in the day, it was by the council as a whole. If sent out after the appointment, no mention is made of it. In fact, the election of Young still had to go through the motions of acceptance by the Saints as a whole.<sup>24</sup>

However, whether he held the title or not, Young was at that time the acknowledged leader of the Mormons. Though supposedly only one of several presidents, Young was pretty much in charge of the Saints. His leadership and fine organizational talents had shown brightly since the exodus from Nauvoo and had placed him far above any others. Events such as the raising of the Mormon Battalion had clearly demonstrated his authority over the flock. So, while Stegner is apparently incorrect concerning the date of the letter and the supposed

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<sup>23</sup>Smith, Essentials In Church History, p. 465.

<sup>24</sup>Journal History (Salt Lake City, Utah, Dec. 5, 1847) (hereafter referred to as Journal History).

source of it, he is probably correct as to who actually was responsible for it. Also it is possible that the nomination of Young by the Apostles for the First Presidency in a meeting held on December 5, 1847 led to some confusion. The position was, according to Joseph F. Smith, dependent on the approval of the members of the church.

Regardless of the precise date of the "Second Epistle," it was, without question, the most important letter in the history of Council Bluffs growth. The letter, to all Saints everywhere, opened very simply. It described events since the Saints left Nauvoo. It urged all who could to go to the Salt Lake City and advised them on many topics, including migration. All of this might or might not have been important to Council Bluffs, except that the letter was explicit as to the place where the Saints were to gather for westward migration.

The epistle designated the east side of the Missouri "near to this place" as the jump off point to all those who could outfit and be ready to leave for the Great Salt Lake by May 1. The Saints, scattered by the mobs of Illinois and Missouri, were urged to come to the site of Council Bluffs to go beyond the mountains. To quote the epistle, "We have named the Pottawattamie lands as the best place for the brethren to assemble on the route."<sup>25</sup> Of course, this alone was sufficient to make what was then Miller's Hollow into an important center, to make it attractive to some businessmen perhaps also. But the next part is the part which really insures that Council Bluffs would one day exist as a permanent, and sizeable, population center. The instructions also

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<sup>25</sup>Stegner, The Gathering of Zion, p. 195.

included those unable to go to the Valley at once. They were instructed to go to the jump-off point and locate on abandoned Potawatomi land. There they were to raise crops, gather stock and supplies and, when ready to depart, sell their improvements to late comers.<sup>26</sup>

These are the people who established the city of Council Bluffs, developed the farm land around it and opened its first true stores. The people who built the city, its first brick buildings, its first stores, its first paper and its first stage lines. They worked to earn money and purchase supplies to make it possible to go on. Others remained or were sent there to aid those who were preparing to migrate to Salt Lake City. The last great migration of the Saints from Council Bluffs was not until 1852. Many stayed on, having found rich soil, and established farms and homes; they had no desire to go further. Gentiles flocked to the city in early 1852 to take advantage of the situation created by Brigham Young's orders to move to the valley of the Great Salt Lake. Farms were purchased for a team and wagon or in exchange for supplies for the journey.

On Saturday, December 4, Young attended a conference in Miller's Hollow and proposed that a large tabernacle be built at that spot for the use of the Saints. The conference members supported the proposal and appointed Henry Miller as a committee of one to supervise the erection of the structure. They then adjourned to Father Ezra Chase's after selecting December 24 as the date to reconvene in the

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid.



just proposed tabernacle. Brother Miller was going to have to hustle. A tabernacle, to seat one thousand people, in twenty days time was no small task. It is a credit to Miller and the Saints that it was completed on time. The tabernacle housed many conferences and enhanced Miller's Hollow's position as center of the church on the east bank of the river considerably.<sup>27</sup>

The general conference held at Miller's Hollow from December 24-27, 1847, was one of the most important held by the Saints in that period of time. During the conference action was taken to reorganize the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints along the lines it had taken under its founder, Joseph Smith. The apostles' choice of Brigham Young as First President was sustained and later ratified by members in Salt Lake City and Manchester, England. Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards, apostles who had been instrumental in the success of the Saints' venture to the West, were selected as Young's counselors.<sup>28</sup>

However, Smith's account of the conference is also rather interesting as a part of the Bluff's history. It is interesting to note that the meeting was held in Miller's Hollow, not in Winter Quarters, across the river. His allusion to the log tabernacle is important also. He stated it would seat nearly one thousand, which would make it quite a large building, especially in those times and in that far removed place. A building of such dimensions would logically be placed

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<sup>27</sup>Journal History, Dec. 4, 1847.

<sup>28</sup>Smith, Essentials In Church History, p. 464.

at the most important population center in the area, thus indicating the growing importance of Miller's Hollow.<sup>29</sup>

Like the winter of 1846-47, the winter of 1847-48 was a hard one for the Saints. Yet their circumstances were much improved; the disease and privation was greatly lessened, particularly for those on the east side of the river. Their harvests had been good, their homes improved and made more secure and some stock procured. However, the Saints in Winter Quarters were less fortunate.

Hosea Stout's diary describes the Winter Quarters as pretty bleak. Most of the wives of the Mormon Battalion there were dependent on the church. The families of the pioneer group had raised no crops that year. This, plus the dissension in the camp and the Indians, left them little better off than the year before. In fact, Stout, as chief of police, asked the council to petition the Saints of the Iowa side to contribute to the care of the needy in Winter Quarters and to help pay the police for services rendered so they might eat also. He pointed out that those who were fairly well situated had left for Great Salt Lake, leaving behind those who simply did not have the wherewithal to continue their trip west. Police were to be sent across the river to accept donations of food, stock, wagons, supplies, clothes, money or anything else that could be spared.<sup>30</sup>

The winter of 1847-48 was spent by many in preparation for the great migration which was to take place in the spring. It would seem

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Brooks, ed., On the Mormon Frontier, pp. 295-296.

apparent that the situation of those Saints who had remained on the east side of the river was far superior to that of those on the west side. The year 1847 had seen some major changes in Miller's Hollow; the year 1848 was to provide some really startling events.

## CHAPTER V

### KANESVILLE - 1848-1851

In February, 1847, the Iowa legislature passed a bill giving the judge of the fourth judicial district the power to organize a county out of the Potawatomi lands just purchased from the Indians. The county, or counties, were to be organized when, in his opinion, the public good required such an organization. Since the Indians were about to leave, the land was to become the property of the state of Iowa. Actual formation of Pottawattamie County was delayed for some time.

However, the Saints, the only white inhabitants of the area, knew nothing of those events. Consequently, in early 1848 they sent two representatives to the state legislature carrying petitions which requested the establishment and formation of a county. The two representatives, Andrew Perkins and Henry Miller, learned of the act passed by the legislature upon their arrival. They then sought the judge responsible for the formation of the county and learned that the appropriate steps had been taken. Formation of the county was completed in 1848 and its final borders were the same as those of the entire area ceded by the Potawatomi. Its first officers included Isaac Clark, judge of probate; George Coulson, Andrew Perkins and David Yearsley as county commissioners, Thomas Burdick as county clerk; John D. Parker as sheriff; James Sloan as district clerk and Evan M. Greene

as recorder and treasurer. Jacob Bigler, William Snow, Levi Bracken and Jonathan Wright were appointed magistrates.<sup>1</sup>

The officers of the county were all of the Latter Day Saints and continued to be until 1852 when the final mass migration took place. So while the Latter Day Saints' historian's office stated that temporal power was given over to the proper government when that government was formed, the church did not lose its control over temporal affairs. Power over earthly affairs merely came under different titles than before.

Meanwhile, other events which were actually of greater importance to the development of Council Bluffs were occurring. A petition to the Postmaster-General was drawn up and signed requesting the establishment of a post office at that point with semi-weekly service from Austin, Missouri. Similar petitions had been sent to the federal government previously by Brigham Young. The petitions requested that such a post office be named Kane.

However, it is of real interest to note that the petition sent on January 20, 1848, which supposedly won the post office for the Saints did not request a post office named Kane. Contrary to popular belief a copy of the petition from the Journal History of the Church reveals the "office to be located at or near said Tabernacle without delay, to be called The Tabernacle Post Office."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Charles H. Babbitt, Early Days at Council Bluffs (Washington, D. C.: Press of Byron S. Adams, 1916), p. 93.

<sup>2</sup>Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints, Apr. 8, 1848.

This is a contradiction of accepted ideas about the formation of the post office for which the town was later named. It can only be assumed that early petitions requested the name of Kane, for that was the name selected by the government for the post office established. It is impossible to believe that the government would have substituted the name of Kane for one requested by the petition which they accepted so wholeheartedly. The choice of the name Kane could hardly be a coincidence.

In January, 1848, a post office at Miller's Hollow was granted the Mormons, and Evan M. Greene, a Mormon, was appointed as postmaster. Thus, another important step in the growth of Council Bluffs was completed, again primarily because of the presence of the Saints.

The exact size of Kanesville at the moment of its transformation to that name is unknown. However, it must have been quite populous for a frontier town, holding perhaps as many as two or even three thousand people. Certainly the group was large enough to attract the interest of the political parties of the state who saw great opportunity in a chance to swing a large block of votes to their party. Sidney Roberts, a Whig agent, made offers to the Saints in March, 1848, in hopes of enlisting their aid for the upcoming election. Hosea Stout mentioned that the Whig offers were accepted, and that the Saints would undoubtedly support the Whig ticket in the fall.<sup>3</sup>

In April a general conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of

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<sup>3</sup>Juanita Brooks, ed., On the Mormon Frontier, The Diary of Hosea Stout 1844-1861 (Utah: Uni. of Utah Press, Utah State Historical Society, 1964), p. 307.

the Latter Day Saints was held in the log tabernacle at Miller's Hollow. Several important decisions were made. Toward the end of the session, the Journal History of the Church reveals that Orson Hyde, one of the twelve apostles, moved that Miller's Hollow be renamed Kanesville, in honor of Thomas L. Kane. The motion was made and passed with the specific objective of honoring Colonel Thomas L. Kane.<sup>4</sup>

It is perhaps a sign of the quality of research in the work of Field and Reed when, in reference to the naming of Kanesville, they state that it was named "in honor of a brother of the Arctic explorer." While this statement is true, it hardly does justice to Colonel Kane nor is it as the Saints intended. Of course, they did come closer to the truth than some other accounts. O. L. Baskin included an article about the formation of Kanesville in his history of Pottawattamie County. The article was written by Captain Joseph LaBarge who, for many years, piloted steamboats up the "Big Muddy" for the American Fur Company. The article, taken from the Omaha Bee, stated that Kanesville was named in honor of "Dr. Kane," the famous Arctic explorer. LaBarge added that he had brought Dr. Kane upriver on a steamboat to investigate the Mormons for the United States government. He did not find them to be as bad as they had been pictured; and so his report was rather favorable to them. The Mormons supposedly changed the name of "Miller's Hill," which is also incorrect, to Kanesville in gratitude.<sup>5</sup>

LaBarge could not have been more inaccurate. Even realizing

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<sup>4</sup>Journal History, Apr. 8, 1848.

<sup>5</sup>O. L. Baskin, History of Pottawattamie County, Iowa (Chicago: O. L. Baskin & Co., Historical Publishers, 1883), p. 33.

that he did the article from memory does not lead one to forgive such blatant mistakes as he made. An expert river pilot should at least have remembered the proper name for Miller's Hollow. Of course, the person who asked him to write the article seems to have felt that the name Kane was that of a Mormon elder.

The conference held in April was long and tedious; many important decisions had to be reached besides the reorganization of the church as a whole. All the major leaders of the Saints were in attendance. The Journal History records speeches and motions made by most of them. The journal of proceedings for April 6 alone covers eight and one-half legal-sized sheets, using double spaced typing. The meeting continued through April 8; the major topic was the question of gathering teams for the migration to the valley. Apparently the question of lending of stock for the journey was a tender issue which required much work. Care of the poor also received considerable attention. This meeting was certainly an exceptionally important one for the future of the Saints and in their entire history.<sup>6</sup>

Other decisions made at the same conference were to have even greater and longer lasting effects on Kanesville. The site had already been designated as the gathering point for all Saints heading for the Salt Lake valley. It was to be the jump-off point at which wagon trains would be made up to head west. Therefore, the decision was made to leave one of the twelve apostles in Kanesville, the only apostle to remain outside of the valley at Salt Lake. Orson Hyde was chosen to

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<sup>6</sup>Journal History, Apr. 6-8, 1848;



take charge of affairs on the east side of the river. His chief aides were George A. Smith and Ezra T. Benson. Hyde's task was of gigantic proportions. Not only was he placed in charge of a group of people which contained upward to as high as sixteen thousand, and as far away as Garden Grove and Mt. Pisgah, but he was also responsible for the moving of all Mormon migrants who arrived at that point to their final destination. Brigham Young himself had direct responsibility for only about five thousand Saints at the time, so that gives a fair indication of the importance of Hyde's position.<sup>7</sup>

Kanesville was to serve as a take-off point for the able and a haven for the destitute, sick and unable, just as it was already doing. While many would stop only briefly, others rested, recuperated and stocked up for two or three years. Later waves of immigrants arriving from abroad even had to be taught to drive horses and oxen, farming methods and how to fend for themselves. Unlike earlier groups, especially the American converts, these groups were largely urbanites. Many were industrial workers, mechanics and skilled workers who had never been out of the city; and most of them were poor, too poor to be able to purchase the large amounts of supplies necessary to cross the plains and mountains to reach the far distant domicile of the Saints.

Winter in 1848 in Winter Quarters on the west bank was little better than that of 1847. Hosea Stout's diary indicated a hard winter, made harder by severe dissension among the Saints. Evidently the

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<sup>7</sup>Lynn Robert Webb, "The Contributions of the Temporary Settlements Garden Grove, Mount Pisgah, and Kanesville, Iowa to Mormon Emigration, 1846-1852" (unpublished abstract of thesis, Dept. of Religion BYU, Provo, Utah, August, 1954), p. 12.

dissatisfaction was deep-rooted and widespread; some had already abandoned the camp and the Saints. Drunkenness was becoming a problem. The Indians were still stealing stock too. The Pawnee were around the town in large numbers, demanding food and stealing horses. The Omaha continued to steal cattle and oxen.<sup>8</sup>

Many Saints suffered from cold, disease, lack of food and supplies and insufficient clothing. The formation of the Mormon Battalion and the Pioneer company had caused a severe shortage of men in the camp. The available work force could not raise crops, protect the camp, build houses, guard the livestock, and prepare to move westward. Those who were most able had left for the valley. The bishops of the church were burdened by a host of people dependent on them for food and shelter. Many who were able to care for themselves were still unable to move on west.

In spite of these problems the Saints were trying to prepare to move out of Winter Quarters; they had no choice. The government had allowed them to remain longer than some had dared hope for already. Troops sent to throw them out were expected by some at any moment. They knew beyond any shadow of a doubt that regardless of which way they went, Winter Quarters had to be abandoned that spring. Those that could not get together an outfit or could not get one through the church would simply have to move back across the river.

Many thought that non-Mormon missionaries were behind the plot to evict them from Winter Quarters and prevent them from taking

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<sup>8</sup>Brooks, On the Mormon Trail, pp. 296, 305-311.

anything with them. They could not even remove lumber to the east side for their use. They thought the missionaries wanted to take over their buildings, wells and cleared ground for their own use.<sup>9</sup>

In the spring wagon trains of Saints started for the valley as soon as grass was sufficient to feed their stock. A small train of twenty-two wagons led the way on May 9. This group, from Mt. Pisgah, was to repair crossings and build rafts for ferrying. On May 17 a large group departed and on May 26 Brigham Young himself took the trail to the valley for the last time. In June six hundred wagons and about two thousand Saints struck out for the valley. In July another five hundred, headed by Willard Richards, went west with about one hundred and seventy wagons.<sup>10</sup>

T. B. H. Stenhouse stated figures for only the first five companies to depart in 1848. He recorded 1,891 people in 623 wagons, plus 2,012 oxen, 131 horses and 44 mules for transportation. He also included "983 cows, 334 loose cattle, 654 sheep, 237 pigs, 904 chickens, 54 cats, 134 dogs, 3 goats, 10 geese, 11 doves, 1 squirrel and 5 ducks."<sup>11</sup>

However, it should be mentioned that the records show the

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<sup>9</sup>"Martha Haven to 'My Dear, dear Mother,'" January 3, 1848, Winter Quarters, Omahan Nation, William Mulden and H. Russell Mortensen, ed., Among the Mormons, Historic Accounts by Contemporary Observers (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958), p. 214.

<sup>10</sup>Joseph Fielding Smith, Essentials In Church History (13th ed.; Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1953), p. 467.

<sup>11</sup>T. B. H. Stenhouse, The Rocky Mountain Saints: A Full and Complete History of the Mormons (Salt Lake City, Utah: Shepard Book Company, 1904), p. 266.

number of people and wagons heading for the valley of the Great Basin, but do not distinguish between those from Winter Quarters, Kanesville or even recent arrivals. Thus it is not actually possible to determine how many of the Saints from Winter Quarters went west and how many moved back east of the river. Nor is it possible to determine the full effects on the population of Kanesville before June or July.

Emigration in 1848 was pretty successful; only one train apparently had any difficulties of note. However, an epistle from Salt Lake City directed to Elders Hyde, Benson and Smith on October 9 clarified a different role that Kanesville played that year. The letter stressed the thanks of those of a late wagon train of Mormons for the priceless aid given them by the Mormons of Kanesville and the area. Having received aid from the Great Basin at the Sweetwater River, they had sent back forty-seven wagons and one hundred and twenty-four yoke of oxen to replace those which Kanesville's Saints had loaned to members of the company. The journey would have been impossible without them, or so they felt. However, it is obvious that Kanesville had already begun its role of aiding Saints bound for the Great Basin.<sup>12</sup>

George A. Smith, one of the two top assistants appointed to remain with and aid Orson Hyde, wrote that Winter Quarters was abandoned on July 3, 1848, and left to flies, fleas, mice and other vermin which abounded in the ruins. Kanesville, however, was "quite a humming place of business." He reported that a number of merchants had moved into

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<sup>12</sup>Orson Hyde, ed., The Frontier Guardian (Kanesville), February 7, 1849, p. 4.

the Pottawattamie area and based their operations at Kanesville. Many crops were already in, and the winter wheat was ready for harvest. Prospects for good crops were, in Smith's opinion, excellent.<sup>13</sup>

The Saints' Historian's Office says that the Saints who did not migrate to the valley moved into Pottawattamie County or an area nearby. They do not reveal any particular numbers. Estimates run about two thousand and five hundred Saints, but these scattered out over the area. Kanesville was the headquarters for those who remained and many removed to it, but certainly not all of them. In fact, a number of new settlements were settled including Carterville, Macedonia, Springville, Cutler's Camp, Coonville and Bethlehem, which was later washed away by the Missouri. The Historian's office states that there were about forty branches of the church on the east side of the river.<sup>14</sup>

The year 1848 was a year of tremendous growth for Miller's Hollow-Kanesville; its population approximately doubled. It grew in other ways, too. The growth of businesses indicated the growing importance of the town and its location. Non-Mormon businessmen began to appear, men who intended to locate permanently, men who saw great potential markets for goods designed for people making the westward trek. The Mormons were not the only ones interested in moving westward and the location would prove to be a real blessing to those with foresight enough to get there early.

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<sup>13</sup>"George A. Smith to John Smith, July 3, 1848," Webb, "The Contributions of the Temporary Settlements," p. 123.

<sup>14</sup>Babbitt, Early Days at Council Bluffs, pp. 82 and 85.

Jonathan B. Stutsman was the first non-Mormon merchant on the scene though Henry Miller, a Saint, had run a store in Miller's Hollow. In fact, he ran a store in Winter Quarters beginning in February. In June, 1848, he moved the store across the river to Kanesville and became a full partner in the firm of Donnell and Stutsman, who were to do business on Madison Street for many years. Stutsman became one of the town's more active leaders after the departure of the Mormons in 1852 and was, for many years, a leading citizen. Stutsman supposedly erected the first frame dwelling and frame store in Kanesville.

Cornelius Voorhis and his wife arrived from St. Louis in August. Voorhis, a partner in the firm of Eddy, Jamison and Company, opened a general merchandise store on Broadway. Like Stutsman, he at first aimed his wares primarily at those moving westward. In time he developed a line of dry goods and supplies capable of filling the needs of any individual or wagon train. Also, like Stutsman, Cornelius Voorhis was to become an active civic leader and a prominent citizen of Council Bluffs.

Also in 1848 Council Bluffs' first grist mill was established. The Mosquito Creek mill built by the Potawatomi was still in operation, but lay outside of the city's limits. Madison Daggar built a grist mill at the foot of the bluff on the west edge of Kanesville. He supplied power by building a race and diverting Indian Creek from its original channel. Though built as a grist mill, machinery for sawing lumber was later added. This was a fine addition to Kanesville, for ease of procuring lumber would eventually lead to more frame buildings and,

generally, larger buildings of a more permanent nature.<sup>15</sup>

1848 also saw the beginning of an educational program in Kanesville. Josiah Merritt established a school in May, with the aid of Orson Hyde. The Saints were, as a group, well educated and took an interest in schools. Merritt was able to report to Brigham Young that they already had nearly one hundred students by October and that a large schoolhouse was about to be built. He expected the school to grow larger rapidly, and as soon as the new building was ready he would need another assistant in addition to Nancy Green. Merritt was quite proud of the results shown by his students. He felt they worked hard and would equal anyone as scholars. Within another year three schools were to be established and three additional men hired as teachers.<sup>16</sup>

Kanesville's appearance in 1848 was not yet that of a booming city. Lynn R. Webb states that Clyde Aitchinson described it as a town of "temporary makeshifts" erected by people who looked forward to leaving for Salt Lake City. Their furniture was rude and homemade, not intended for permanent use. Their homes were probably small, also not designed as a place in which they intended to spend the rest of their days.<sup>17</sup>

Yet at the end of 1848 Miller's Hollow, now Kanesville, had undergone exciting, rapid changes. Its population had doubled, with

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>16</sup>"Merritt to Brigham Young, Oct. 1848," Webb, "The Contributions of the Temporary Settlements," p. 135.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 126.

estimates ranging from five and a half to seven thousand inhabitants after the exodus from Winter Quarters. The first "Gentiles" had arrived, businesses had been established and bountiful crops had been harvested, enabling additions to homes as well as enabling more people to acquire the necessary supplies for migration westward. More important to the future of the town, it was beginning to take on an air of permanence. People like Stutsman and Voorhis were there to stay, whether the Mormons stayed or not. In order to survive as a town Kanesville could not depend on the Saints indefinitely, sooner or later, most, if not all of them, were certain to leave for the Great Salt Lake.

Kanesville did not see large numbers of foreign immigrants in 1848. The years of the gold-rush lay just around the corner. The great masses of gold seekers were yet to come, as were the vast trains of Saints converted in Europe. The great stress by the church elders was placed on securing the new location and bringing as many of those Mormons that had been scattered from Nauvoo back into the fold as possible. Once they had been secured, then the elders could turn their attention to the conversion of foreign groups and bringing them to the valley of the Great Salt Lake. Meanwhile, Kanesville more than fulfilled the original task assigned it by the Mormon leaders. It served as a haven for the ill, the poor, the tired and the unable Saints, a place to rest, resupply or earn the wherewithal to continue the westward journey. Crops were planted, raised, harvested and used to provide food for immediate needs or to supply them on their journey west. Grain was ground into flour and sold to raise funds for



purchasing stock and dry goods necessary for the trip most expected to make as soon as possible.

The year 1849 proved to be even more dramatic than 1848 for Kanesville. Mormon migration was not as large as would be supposed, but the influx of "Gentiles" was tremendous. The news of gold strikes in California transformed Kanesville from a peaceful and serene town to a booming, brawling, bustling jump-off point for thousands of adventurers who were headed for the gold fields. The Saints prospered because their services and crops brought high prices. New stores opened and people moved into the area to profit from the congregation of large numbers of would-be miners. Not all of the newcomers were from the elite levels of society; drunkenness, fights, and gambling became common place as the riffraff of the frontier began to move into the area to take advantage of the situation.

As previously mentioned Orson Hyde was left at Kanesville to carry out the task of training and organizing parties of Saints which were headed for Salt Lake City. Kanesville was the designated jump-off point, whether the Saints came overland from the east or upriver from St. Louis or even New Orleans. Whenever fifty wagons, well armed and provisioned, were prepared, Hyde was to send them west. He was also to insure that no group left without sufficient numbers, arms or provisions.

Hyde's task also included the responsibility for training migrants to cope with the frontier. Those Saints coming from the eastern areas of the United States or from Canada did not require training for the trail because they were quite competent by the time

they reached Kanesville. Few of them needed to be taught how to farm in the West. Foreign immigrants were going to be a different matter altogether. Most of the Saints converted in foreign lands were from urban areas like Manchester, England. Most of them were industrial workers who saw in Mormonism the chance for a new life and new hope. Between them they had a multitude of skills, many of which proved to be very helpful, but few of them were even remotely prepared to cope with frontier life. They had to be taught the fundamentals of frontier existence; the basic skills required to live in the West. They had to learn to hook up and drive teams of horses and oxen, clear land, sow, tend and harvest crops, build cabins, plant gardens, find water and fight Indians. All the while they must be taught the Mormon religion.

This was Hyde's task and another basic purpose of Kanesville. The problems of preparing those people for the westward journey were to be compounded by the lack of money. Those who were attracted to the Mormons were not those that were satisfied with life, but more often the poor, the downtrodden and the unemployed, the common masses of Europe. Most of them found it difficult to raise the funds for passenger fees and supplies to even reach Kanesville. There they had to find ways to raise the funds to provision themselves for the long overland journey to the Great Salt Lake, with enough left over to last until crops could be harvested.

Kanesville provided the place where all of these things could be accomplished. Land was still available, sometimes the more prosperous newcomers could purchase farms from those leaving for the West. Jobs could be found and supplies were not too unreasonable.

Wagons could be built, crops raised and stock purchased for the trek up the Platte valley and over the mountains. All the time the converts were surrounded by their brethern, receiving religious as well as temporal training. What is more important to this narrative is that, in the process, they helped transform the site of Council Bluffs from a wilderness to a civilized town with all the trappings and goods of civilized society. ✓

In spite of their best previous efforts to be ready for migrants at Salt Lake City the harvests for 1848 were poor and the winter wheat did not do well. The elders were forced to proceed with great caution in 1849 for fear of ending up with more people than they could provide food for until the fall harvest. Word was sent out to Saints of the world that migration to the valley in 1849 would, of necessity, be selective in nature. Only those who could supply themselves with foodstuffs in great enough quantity to make the entire trip to the valley and, in addition, enough to see them through until their first crops could be harvested, were to come. This undoubtedly prevented many potential migrants from moving westward that year. They were further warned that they could not expect relief columns to meet parties on the trail. Each train was to be prepared to complete the trek on its own.

Despite these dire warnings some Saints departed for the valley of the Great Salt Lake. A surprisingly large number of followers were able to meet the stipulations set down for them; and others left the frontier settlements anyway, depending on luck and God to see them through. Wallace Stegner, author of The Gathering of Zion, the Story

of the Mormon Trail, relates that five to six hundred wagons left Kanesville for the valley in 1849, containing approximately fifteen hundred people.<sup>18</sup>

Stegner felt it was a great year for the Saints for other reasons. Though fewer Saints reached their final destination than was originally hoped, thousands of California-bound gold seekers passed through the valley. The Mormons received fantastic prices for their small surpluses of grain. Draft animals were sold at high prices, or traded, two or three worn out, trail-weary oxen for one fat, healthy one. The thin, bony beasts were then pastured for a few weeks, and, their strength and health renewed, sold to another trail outfit. Blacksmiths, carpenters and wheelwrights made scandalous wages. The migrants had little choice for there was not another place to obtain what the Saints could provide. Profits were so good that the elders were hard put to insure that enough wheat and flour were maintained in the camp through the winter and still have seed to plant for the coming year.

At the same time the travelers were lightening their loads in preparation for crossing the mountains. Thus the Saints purchased household items and bulky equipment at rock bottom prices, often below original purchase price, with fifteen hundred miles of freighting for free. Other Mormons simply set out down the back trail and picked up hundreds of much needed household items such as stoves, dressers, chests, tables, bed frames and china closets thrown out by those

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<sup>18</sup>Wallace Stegner, The Story of the Mormon Trail (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), p. 205.

foolish enough to think the trip could be made without sacrificing all the comforts of home. When they began to rise out of the Platte valley the going began to get harder and steeper, loads began to lighten as travelers came face to face with reality.

The upshot of all this was wealth for the Mormons of the valley of the Great Salt Lake, wealth and the comforts of life. They could now better aid others, those who had not yet arrived in the valley, the poor and unable. Thus it was that the Perpetual Emigrating Fund was established by gifts and donations of Saints who were already settled in their new homes. Interest free loans, payable when the debtor was able, were granted from the fund, allowing hundreds of Saints, especially in Europe, to migrate to the established refuge in the mountains.

While all of this may seem to be a deviation from the established topic of this discourse, it all ties to Kanesville. First, the harsh winter which caused very selective immigration encouraged Saints at Kanesville to stay on for another year, to enlarge their farms and houses and plant more crops. Roots were established so deeply that some never did leave for the mountains.

Secondly, many Saints reached Kanesville, and in view of the situation, stayed there. No accurate records exist of the number of Saints who arrived at Kanesville in 1849. Clyde B. Aitchinson, writing in the Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, stated that the population of the entire county grew from 2,758 in 1849 to 7,828 in 1850. In fact, he stated that Kanesville was larger in 1850 than in 1852 or even 1854, two



years after the Saints departed. Unfortunately the source of Aitchinson's figures is unknown.<sup>19</sup>

According to Aitchinson's census accounts, as shown by Lynn Webb, Kanesville must have grown considerably in 1849. Though Aitchinson gave no statistics for Kanesville, his figures would establish a growth of 2,070 people for Pottawattamie County. This would be a sizeable growth factor for any similar frontier area, yet it was achieved despite the fact that fifteen hundred Saints moved west out of Kanesville in the year 1849. Many of those who departed were probably passers-through, but some had been inhabitants of Kanesville or the area.

In the process of guiding the Saints of the Kanesville region Orson Hyde established the area's first newspaper, The Frontier Guardian. The Guardian was more than an ordinary newspaper; it was directed to Saints all over the country and the world. It probably had the largest and widest spread circulation of any newspaper, in a town of similar size, in the country.<sup>20</sup> Copies were sent to the Saints of the world. It was the mouthpiece of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints. Hyde was not only a Bishop in the church, but president of the Council of Twelve; therefore the paper should rightly be considered the official organ of the Saints. It carried the epistles of the elders and the advice and council of Brigham Young himself. Yet

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<sup>19</sup>Webb, "The Contributions of the Temporary Settlements," pp. 125-126.

<sup>20</sup>A good indication of the successful circulation of the Guardian is the fact that many St. Joseph, Missouri, and even some St. Louis merchants advertised in it regularly. Many St. Joseph stores advertised their wares in every issue.

the articles on western travel were considered so good that "Gentiles" followed them as a key to success in their own westward migrations. The Guardian was the paper of the Saints long before presses were established in the Great Basin.

The paper itself was unique; usually four pages long, each page was always devoted to a set format of news or story. Of course, each page had large amounts of advertising on it, offering the latest and best of Kanesville's goods and services. Other than advertisements page one was always devoted to church matters, usually to answers to various basic questions dealing with Mormonism and usually written by Orson Hyde, who was an elder of the church.

The second page was devoted to news items, advice from church leaders, often concerning migration, and foreign news items concerning matters of interest to the Saints. Page three was usually a continuation of page two, except that it also generally carried an article on Indian customs in each issue.

Page four was usually a hodge-podge of items. Some story or selection from a famous author was almost always included. Often these were scenes from plays or classical works of literature. Sometimes poems and brief essays were thrown in. A few short jokes or sayings were mixed in, along with brief notes of interest or interesting facts.

Actually the Frontier Guardian is about the only solid source of information available to provide information on Kanesville for this period of time through 1854. Those Mormons who kept diaries moved on by 1849, and contemporary non-Mormon accounts of Kanesville apparently do not exist. Authors of early histories on Pottawattamie County become

eyewitnesses in 1852, but not sooner. Frederick Piercy, a Mormon who passed through the area, is one of the few who wrote anything of Kanesville in this period. Homer H. Field, co-author of History of Pottawattamie County, Iowa, moved to Kanesville in the spring of 1852 just as the Mormons were leaving. O. L. Baskin, who also wrote a History of Pottawattamie County, Iowa, never saw Kanesville until 1854 when it had already become Council Bluffs. Charles Babbitt, Early Days at Council Bluffs, arrived in the town in 1853, at the age of ten.

It also seems somewhat odd to note that The Frontier Guardian used the terms Kanesville and Council Bluffs almost interchangeably. Many of the stores advertising their wares in the Guardian listed their location as Kanesville, Council Bluffs, Iowa. The term Council Bluffs seems to have designated, as before, a larger area than the site of Kanesville, but was now restricted to the east bank of the river.

The Frontier Guardian began bi-weekly publications with a copy produced on February 7, 1849. Orson Hyde, editor of the paper, continued to publish it until the Mormons left in 1852. Hyde himself was a major contributor; his chief assistants in advancing Mormon migration, George Smith and Ezra Benson, wrote many articles, most of which were directed strictly to the Saints. A. C. Ford was his able assistant editor who often ran the paper while Hyde was elsewhere. Those sections devoted to advice, counseling and regulating migration appeared in the spring. Each issue devoted at least some space to that cause and several copies gave over large amounts of space to the topic.

Beginning in the paper's second edition, February 21, 1849, Hyde began to issue instructions for the migration of the approaching



season. He stated that as soon as fifty wagons had gathered at Traders Point or another place in the area they would be organized into a military unit. Each wagon would be inspected to insure that sufficient supplies had been obtained. Every man and able boy were to be well-armed, in fact, the council offered arms to those needing them. No Saints were to roll a wheel-length west of the Missouri until passing inspection or without the required number of wagons.<sup>21</sup>

The same edition explained the advantages of Kanesville as a jump-off point to all who would read it. While assuring Saints of the availability of goods at Kanesville, it also attempted to draw non-Mormon gold-seekers through Kanesville on their way to California. Hyde pointed out that for anyone from the northern part of the eastern United States the route through Kanesville contained many advantages. The total distance to California via Kanesville was shorter than any other route. Also they could leave the Mississippi sooner because the route across Iowa was well established and populated so immigrants need not wait for the arrival of grass for their stock. They could cross Iowa, wait for grass at Kanesville and have a headstart on those taking more southern routes. Hyde also assured them that Kanesville had every article of provision they could desire, and at rates competitive with any spot on the river. In fact, he said, they could not afford to haul many items to Kanesville because rates were so low there.<sup>22</sup>

In the March 21 issue Ezra Benson and George Smith wrote an

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<sup>21</sup>Hyde, ed., The Frontier Guardian (Kanesville), Feb. 21, 1849, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., February 21, 1849, p. 21.

article to Saints gathering to cross the Great Plains. They stressed the importance of accumulating plenty of provisions and having good wagons and strong teams. In mid-June Benson and Smith led the last Mormon train out of Kaneshville for the year; they even took a small group of California-bound settlers with them as far as the Great Basin.

Just prior to leaving Benson and Smith included an article in The Guardian reminding the Saints of the adverse conditions in the valley at Salt Lake. The article was in the form of a notice to all who were either taking some of the poor or hiring them to drive stock or wagons. It informed, or reminded, them that because of the bad crops at Salt Lake the previous year they would have to be responsible for caring for and feeding the poor, as well as themselves, until they could plant and harvest crops for themselves. The Valley, they stated, could not sustain an influx of poor brought there by those able to hire services to that point.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the cautioning of Hyde, Benson and Smith, many Saints moved out across the prairies. Most of them passed inspections and had few difficulties of any unusual nature. Hyde reported that three to four hundred wagons had left for the Great Salt Lake by June 13. Benson and Smith led a large train out of Kaneshville on June 14, so migration to the Valley in 1849 was not small when all circumstances are considered.

Of course, Mormons were not the only ones going up the Mormon Trail on the north side of the Platte. Unlike 1846 migrants, '49'ers

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., June 13, 1849, p. 2.

did not fear the Saints, and, occasionally, even traveled with them. The Guardian issues for May carried sample constitutions drawn up by various immigrant companies, probably for those who were trying to draw up their own. The May 30 accounts for the month list five large companies having left from the Kanesville area for the gold fields. The Iowa Company No. 1, the Knox County Company, the California Express Company, the Wisconsin and Iowa Union Company and the Badger Company were the five listed. The names would indicate that most of the immigrants were from Iowa and Wisconsin.<sup>24</sup>

The Iowa Company No. 1 was the largest, with about 224 people listed. It was also the only train to list women and children on its rolls. Even then there were only ten of each. These trains were made up of men trying for high stakes and unwilling to be slowed down by a family in their race for prime claims. Names like the California Express Company, listing only seventy men, imply the urgent need for speed. Altogether 554, 10 women and 10 children are listed as having departed in May. Of course, there easily could have been others in addition.<sup>25</sup>

The outfitting of 574 people certainly did not harm the economy of Kanesville. In addition, a huge freight outfit led by Samuel Gully left for the Great Salt Lake with sixty to seventy thousand pounds of freight contracted to G. H. Livingston and Company. Gully doubly aided

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., May 30, 1849, p. 31.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

Kanesville's economy by hiring about thirty drivers to make the trip with him.<sup>26</sup>

Store owners like Stutsman and Voorhis must have been delighted. In fact, business must have been even greater than expected. By mid-May Hyde included in his columns a brief plea for shipments of bacon and flour to Kanesville. So much had been taken up by the California immigrants that the supply was nearly exhausted, causing excessively high prices. The demand was simply greater than the area's ability to produce, despite the good crops harvested in 1848. Mormon farmers were undoubtedly as elated as the store owners.<sup>27</sup>

Much space in the Guardian was devoted to instructions for people who did not intend to make the trek to the valley. The March 21 issue alone held three separate articles directed toward people who were staying at Kanesville or coming there in 1849. Benson and Smith urged those staying on to aid those going to the valley by loaning them wagons and teams. Both groups were urged to plant as many crops as possible, not only for themselves, but for later travelers and for those coming to Kanesville in preparation for migration the next year or two. For those selling land their advice was simply to do the best they could: hopefully it would be enough to enable them to migrate. If it was not, then they were to work it to the best advantage for themselves and the church. The suggestion was added that if they could outfit for the valley anyway, they could give their farms to the church for aid to

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., Apr. 18, 1849, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., May 16, 1849, p. 2.

the poor.<sup>28</sup>

Each issue of the first months of 1849 carried advertisements of farms for sale. Land claims, improved farms, a sawmill and other properties were listed for sale. In fact, Orson Hyde extended an invitation to the Saints of the world to come to Kanesville to prepare for migration to Salt Lake. He stated that the land was rich and plentiful, with timber enough to last for several years, if conserved. Farms were available where a person could plant crops and migrants provided good markets. The miners were well supplied with gold, but often needed provisions. Some spent gold freely to build elaborate outfits, others came well outfitted, but all needed food supplies. Outfits could be raised at Kanesville as easily or easier than anywhere else because of the market they created. Since the demand was high, prices received were excellent. Profits to Mormon farmers would allow them to prepare their own outfits at the earliest possible date.

Business was so good that the Saints nearly ran themselves out of food and grain supplies by late March. Hyde warned of allowing Indians, Oto and Omaha who crossed the river on the ice, into the village because of the shortage of supplies needed to carry the Saints through till their harvests could be brought in.<sup>29</sup> Later, in mid-May, Hyde was even requesting shipments of bacon and flour be brought to Kanesville to fulfill the needs of the immigrants and the local population and thus lower prices.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., May 16, 1849, p. 2.

Like any frontier town Kanesville grew, perhaps its pace was more rapid than others, but the people took pride in its accomplishments. As a for instance, Hyde commented in his first issue of his pleasure at the growth of their schools and of the generally favorable attitude taken toward education by the people. Two schools, each with a principal and an assistant, had been organized within Kanesville alone, each with about eighty students. Many others were reportedly in the area around the town. This would seem to support the idea that the Saints were strong advocates of education, regardless of where they were.<sup>31</sup>

Several new stores began operations in Kanesville in 1849. J. E. Johnson's Emporium of the West was opened by September. It was a large store designed to supply every need of migrant or local settler. It even had a bakery and confectionary. Abel Lamb's Bluff House opened its doors to sell supplies, as did Brown and Barnham's, a large general store. Smaller stores and shops were also opened, creating a budding business district and the heart of a growing town.

A committee report published in October set forth the businesses of the town for the purpose of informing migrants. The committee's findings included six large stores capable of supplying most needs for migrants, with additional smaller shops of a similar type and design. Two public houses, a bakery and confectionary and drug store were listed. For equipping for the westward journey there were ten flour and grist mills, four wagon shops, two blacksmiths, a saddle

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., February 7, 1849, p. 2.

and leather goods shop, and various mechanics such as gunsmiths and harness makers. Guides to anywhere in the West were available, and two ferries awaited them to start them on their way.<sup>32</sup>

It should be mentioned that the large Needham and Ferguson store and the Smith and Tootle Store, both large, extensively stocked dry goods stores had opened. They aimed squarely at the migrant market. A Dr. E. G. Williams had hung up his shingle in the town. A sizeable public house was opened in February, the Union Hotel, operated by Hiram Clark.

It would only seem fair to mention, however, that the article was intended for all possible migrants. While probably basically true a mere look at the list of committee members would lead one to use a bit of caution in accepting the report verbatim. Innocent readers outside of Kanesville's immediate area had little way of knowing that the committee, composed of Stutsman, Brown, Voorhis, Bishop and Needham, was made up entirely of store owners whose personal interest in attracting migrants of any kind was high.

The committee failed to mention that the character of Kanesville was beginning to change. Once a peaceful town where non-workers were not tolerated and gambling and drinking was taboo, it was no longer peaceful or quiet. The gold-seekers had attracted the frontier riffraff, always ready to make an easy dollar. Gamblers, frontiersmen, traders, thieves and ruffians had appeared to fleece the west-bound traveler of his stake. When miners began to return from

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., October 5, 1849, p. 3.

the gold fields the situation only became worse. Some sources state that every type of crime was committed as Gentiles flocked to the scene. Kanesville, like many an infant frontier town, had its wild period when law was almost non-existent and the lawless element was in abundance.

Of course, those in leadership positions for the Latter Day Saints were still convinced that Kanesville was the place to gather. As late as mid-September, 1849, Orson Pratt instructed converted English Saints to emigrate to Kanesville. It was, he assured them, the best place to situate in preparation for gathering together to go on to the Great Basin. While they would have to earn their way, they could be assured of having ample opportunity to do so in the Council Bluffs area.<sup>33</sup>

Kanesville was on the move in 1849. Transportation and communication lines were being developed. Having already obtained a federal post office, their main concern was to make better connections with those who had gone to Salt Lake City. Almon W. Babbitt established a private postal route from Salt Lake to Kanesville; beginning his first run from Salt Lake City in September, the trip to that point was to be made from Kanesville bi-monthly. ✓

A stage line was advertising its establishment by mid-September even though the route was not opened until the next spring on a full schedule. The route, from St. Joseph to Kanesville, was laid out in ✓

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<sup>33</sup>Fawn M. Brodie, ed., Route from Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard Uni., 1962), p. 19.



hopes of gaining a government mail contract, as well as hauling passengers and light freight.

Stagelines, freightlines and mail routes all helped establish Kanesville as a town. Each played its part, however small. The transportation system which would really guarantee a large, permanent city in the area was the railroad; without it Kanesville was certainly destined to become just another river town once the Mormons were gone. Rumors of the possibility of railroad lines for the area began in 1849. Articles began to appear in the Guardian and rumors flew. Rumor had it that the Council Bluffs area was the favored choice of easterners for a "trans-continental railroad." One "letter to the editor" appeared in the Guardian on November 14 from "Platte" who wrote "as one who knows the West" he could assure the people that Kanesville was the only feasible route for a transcontinental railroad. He assured them that being almost straight west of New York and Chicago plus lying at the mouth of the Platte valley route was a great advantage, not only was it flatter, straighter, and better timbered than other routes, it was also eight hundred miles shorter. Kanesville was capable of furnishing labor, supplies, transportation and a market for any railroad into the area. It was understood that representatives to the National Pacific Railroad Convention were already in Pottawattamie County to study the land and the area's potential as a possible railroad route. Their report would be given to eastern capitalists for their consideration.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Hyde, ed., The Frontier Guardian (Kanesville), November 14, 1849, p. 2.

Actually "Platte," whomsoever he might be, was closer to the truth than most might suspect. The November 28 edition reported that Amherst K. Williams, the Franklin County, New York, delegate to the national railroad convention at St. Louis, was in Kanesville. His purpose was to examine the area and prepare a report to his constituents on the feasibility of passing the proposed national railway through the frontier at Kanesville and continuing on up the Platte River valley.<sup>35</sup> This is the man that "Platte" had referred to as Judge Williams; and the report of Mr. William's activities follows "Platte's" line of speculation very closely. Indeed, "Platte" was certainly a well-informed individual.

1849 closed quietly for the Mormon part of Kanesville's population. Their biggest problem at the time seemed to be with some dissident groups who could not, or would not, accept polygamy or Brigham Young. Some younger men had been attracted to the gay life of the growing town and had become heavy drinkers. Problems with mail routes were causing some feelings of isolation. However, the winter as a whole was gentle to the Saints who were now well protected, clothed and fed. It no longer caused the hardships endured in the winters 1846-47 or 1847-48.

The year 1850 was similar to 1849 for Kanesville; though it lacked the great growth in number of stores of the previous year. The town continued to grow rougher. J. A. Kelting and Co. was one of the few really new stores aimed at migrant trade. The establishment of his

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., November 28, 1849, p. 2.

"Ensign of the West" was offset by the selling out of Needham and Ferguson's Beehive Store. Needham was determined to move to the Great Basin in 1851, even if he did have to give up a highly successful business venture. Donnell, Stutsman and Co. replaced Smith and Stutsman. Riddle and Company opened the Union Store and B. R. Pegram and Company opened a sizeable dry goods establishment on Main Street called the Farmers' and Emigrants' Store.<sup>36</sup>

C. O. Mynster set up a large store after the spring rush and traded mostly with Mormon residents. His store, on the site of the present day First Methodist Broadway Church, later became the infamous Ocean Wave Saloon. The town's major business was still migration. A drugstore was opened by a combination of three doctors who had recently arrived in the area; one, Dr. B. Y. Shelby, was later to be the founder for whom Shelby County, Iowa was named.

A Reverend William Simpson visited Kaneshville in 1850 and reported to the Methodist Council of the great need for a church there. There was not a single non-Mormon church in the town in spite of its growing non-Mormon population. He was sent to remedy that situation and thus became the first resident non-Mormon religious leader of Kaneshville. In fact, no other church sent representatives to the town until 1868. Rev. Simpson, who later became a Bishop, failed to establish a regular church. It was not until 1865 that the Broadway

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<sup>36</sup>A good indicator of the size and success of Kaneshville merchants was the October 30 report in the Frontier Guardian of the loss of the fall and winter stocks of four major merchants when a steamboat hit a snag and sank. The entire cargo was lost, including an estimated \$90,000 worth of goods destined for Kaneshville.

Methodist Church was built on the ruins of the burned out Ocean Wave Saloon.<sup>37</sup>

A second newspaper was begun by Almon W. Babbitt. The Council Bluffs Bugle was the product of a political dispute that had raged between Whigs and Democrats for several years. Babbitt, a Democrat, denounced Hyde for selling the Mormon vote to the Whig party and his paper was a one man crusade against the Whigs, the Guardian and Hyde. Hyde made no attempts to cover his political feelings and openly stated that his paper was a constant supporter of the Whig cause. However, he denied having sold a "block" of Mormon votes in exchange for certain laws favorable to the Saints and a new press. Babbitt did his best to point out the almost solid Whig vote turned out by Hyde and his assistants, but apparently he met with little success. Actually he sold out in 1853 and moved to Salt Lake, so his anti-Mormon period was short lived.

Kanesville was on the move; a second bakery was opened, a sign painter set up a shop, a forwarding and commission merchant opened his doors, a new gunsmith and a meatmarket were added to the list of stores. All of these simply imply that Kanesville was a growing town which, in the eyes of businessmen, showed promise of continuing to be an excellent market for migrant goods. The northern route up the Platte was well known to many besides the Saints; its continued usage was almost assured.

Migration was the big event of the year, for Mormons and

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<sup>37</sup>Baskin, History of Pottawattamie County, Iowa, pp. 37, 95-97.

Gentiles. Migration was heavier than expected. In spite of early ads which assured all comers of plentiful supplies of every description, prices were high and supplies scarce by early May. In fact, profits were so good that some Saints remained in Kanesville instead of migrating themselves. Orson Hyde attempted to warn everyone of the pressing need for oxen, horses and mules at an early date. Although grain could be had, most available teams were high priced and many would not find any at all. ✓

Hyde kept good records of arrivals and departures at Kanesville. He attempted to publish lists of California bound immigrants arrived and departed. He published long lists of migrants who had stopped by to sign his register. By June 12 the Guardian listed 4,500 California-bound wagons carrying 13,500 men as having passed through. He estimated that 22,000 draft animals were used to carry or pull the men and their supplies. This is exclusive of Mormon trains. In May alone 14,000 passed through. Seven companies of fifty to a hundred men each left early; their departure was reported in the May 1 issue. The Des Moines Company Number One led the way on April 18. These parties left despite the lack of grass which came late that year. On June 12 only ten arrivals were noted and only one small company departed.<sup>38</sup>

The Guardian also reported about seven hundred wagons of Saints departing from Kanesville and surrounding areas with 4,000 sheep and 5,000 cattle, horses and mules. While no exact numbers of people are included, it is obvious that Kanesville's population was probably

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<sup>38</sup>Hyde, ed., The Frontier Guardian (Kanesville), May 1, 1849, p. 2; May 15, 1849, p. 2; May 29, 1849, p. 2; June 12, 1849, p. 3.

seriously reduced. This was somewhat offset by the arrival of 1,497 English Saints at New Orleans, all were bound for Kanesville to provision themselves for the overland journey west. Many would have nothing when they reached Kanesville and were likely to have stayed on there for a time.<sup>39</sup>

Only about two hundred Saints passed through from the East. However, Orson Pratt, on mission in England, shipped 5,369 converted Saints from England from September, 1848, through February, 1851. Most of these came across the Atlantic in 1850. They were shipped from Liverpool to New Orleans, later from New York and Boston, few were not originally English and many came from Manchester,<sup>40</sup>

Robert Campbell, carrying mail from Salt Lake City, reported meeting about eight hundred Mormon wagons on the trail. He mentioned several companies by name. This is not conclusive evidence, but does support the view that Mormon migration to the Great Basin in 1850 was fairly large in size despite warnings that they must be prepared to make the journey without help and have plenty of provisions.

In 1850 many Gentiles entered Kanesville and not all left. Their presence was not exactly desirable in some cases. They definitely were not under the influence of the Mormons; in fact, they were apparently creating a bad influence on the young Saints. Complaints were common, thievery, drunkenness and other crimes were on the rise. A horse-thief ring was uncovered, a bogus money press was captured and

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., June 12, 1850, p. 3.

<sup>40</sup>Brodie, Route From Liverpool, pp. 41-43.

a movement was under way to construct a jail, which heretofore had been considered unnecessary. Cursing, gambling and horse-racing were wide spread, even on Sunday. Especially irritating were the horse-races held on city streets, seven days a week. Minutes of the Latter Day Saints' fall conference contained a typical Mormon complaint by Elder Lymon Stoddard who spoke out against drunkenness, dissension and vagabonds. He was unhappy about the large numbers of non-Mormons settling permanently throughout the entire area in the midst of the Saints. He felt the Saints were becoming demoralized by their presence and actions. Like other Mormons he placed value in work and was disturbed by the large number of apparently jobless and shiftless ruffians who inhabited the town's streets. Stoddard expressed views which were apparently held by many.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Hyde, ed., The Frontier Guardian (Kanesville), October 30, 1850, p. 3.

## CHAPTER VI

### DEPARTURE OF THE MORMONS - 1851-53

As more and more Mormons left Kanesville, less and less was written about it. With the exception of Orson Hyde, no prominent church leaders remained in Iowa. Outside of Hyde or his assistant, A. C. Ford, eye-witness accounts of events are almost not to be had for the last two years of Mormon occupation of the area. Scattered mentions or references are all that remain, even the papers are hard to come by. The Western Bugle building was destroyed by fire in 1853, leaving a full copy of only one issue. Kanesville's population had already fallen from its peak in 1850. Non-Mormons, like Homer Field, do not enter the area until late 1852 or did not write any accounts. There are no governmental records of any kind for the period to aid a historian; they were consumed in a fire in the late 1850's when the courthouse burned down. Even the manuscript history of Kanesville in the Mormon Archives does not afford aid; it ended on October 5, 1848.

By mid-summer of 1851 the world and the Saints knew that 1852 would see a mass migration of American Saints to their gathering place in "Zion." The Fifth General Epistle, printed in the May 30, 1851 edition of the Guardian stated that there should not be a Saint left in Canada or America outside of their Zion by the end of 1852. Brigham Young condemned those who held on to their property as greedy, and hinted they would pay for the greed by burning for eternity, if they



continued to hold out.<sup>1</sup>

1851 was, therefore, a year of decision and preparation for the Saints. Many did not wait until 1852. Newspaper advertisements reveal the availability of land in Kanesville; by April Thomas McKenzie advertised over one hundred farms, some with crops, as being available. His ads were aimed at Mormons coming into the area by steamboat from New Orleans who could go no farther. Yet certainly they were read by non-Mormons. Joseph Johnson advertised a number of houses, buildings for stores and choice lots for sale within Kanesville itself. The old Needham and Ferguson store now advertised under the proprietorship of W. B. Ferguson; Needham was off for the Great Basin at last.<sup>2</sup>

Estimated numbers of Mormons departing the Kanesville area in 1851 was as high as 2,500; many needed the help of the Perpetual Emigration Fund to make the trip. These were the very poor who were unable to make it on their own, but that was the purpose of the P. E. F., as it was called. The Saints were one step closer to their goal of securing their entire American flock within the safety of the Great Basin.

In spite of the loss of sizeable numbers of Mormons in the migrations of 1848-1851, life in Kanesville went on. Kanesville changed, yes, but it also continued to take on the attributes of a substantial, permanent town. Kanesville had become too important as a western jumping-off point to lay down and expire because of the loss of

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<sup>1</sup>Hyde, ed., The Frontier Guardian (Kanesville), November 14, 1849, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., April 18, 1851, p. 4.

the Saints who founded it. More Gentiles would flock in to take advantage of the cheap land, already developed, and hopefully, cheap stores or town sites. Samuel Bayliss was fortunate enough to be able to purchase a four hundred acre tract which covered most of the town, part of which later became Bayliss Park. It must be remembered that the Mormons held only squatters' rights; the area had not yet been surveyed by the federal government. No land office had yet begun operations.

An act of the Iowa legislature reduced Pottawattamie County to its present size from the original which was supposed to cover the entire Potawatomi Indian reservation signed over in 1846. It was cut down to about twenty-four miles from north to south boundaries and about twenty-eight miles east of Kanesville.

The long delay in organizing Pottawattamie County was largely due to a political battle between the fairly evenly balanced Whigs and Democrats in Iowa's legislature. The Whigs had succeeded in gaining Mormon support, with the aid of Orson Hyde, but the Democrats strove to keep them from voting. One way to do this was to delay official county organization, forcing them to vote as a district of Monroe County where the strong Democratic vote would over-balance their vote. This would make it difficult for the Whigs to really take advantage of their large block of votes. The political manipulations, including a "lost" set of registration and ballot books, would continue until the Mormons departed.

Despite its position on the far western edge of the county, Kanesville was the dominant town of the entire area. This led to a

special election announced in the March 7 issue of the Guardian which advised of the election to be held on Monday, April 7, to choose the county seat and elect county officers. Voting took place at Kanesville, Keg Creek and Pleasant Grove, which laid eight or nine miles above Kanesville on Big Mosquito Creek. Although weather was bad, cold and drizzling, the voter turnout was fair, considering conditions. As could be expected, Mormons won control of all offices of the new government, and Kanesville was selected as the "seat of justice." Many candidates, such as E. M. Green, ran unopposed. James Sloan defeated Christopher Brown for the Sixth Judicial District bench, four hundred and six to seventy-one, so at least four hundred and seventy-seven people voted. Judge Sloan resigned in 1852 to go to Salt Lake, as did others. Greene, earlier appointed to the Kanesville post office and a nephew of Brigham Young, was selected as county clerk. Kanesville's justices-of-the-peace William Vanosdale and Jacob Degraw and Constables William Gooch and Roswell Ferry were selected for their respective posts also.<sup>3</sup>

In August a second election was held in Kanesville, to fill out the county government. Thomas Burdick was selected for county judge; Alexander McRae became county sheriff. The county recorder was to be Luke Johnson; coroner was carried by Egbert Ellsworth. M. L. Benson, apparently the only winner to have any competition, became the county surveyor by a margin of one vote. This election filled the rest of the offices commonly found under the ordinary county government

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., March 7, 1851, p. 2 and April 18, 1851, p. 2.

system. Why the election of all local and county officials was not held at the same time was not explained. Again, most of the office-holders selected were apparently Mormons.<sup>4</sup>

Kanesville continued to grow, despite the loss of influential and prosperous people. A new academy was opened in early January. A watch and clock maker, James Frodsham, opened shop about the same time. A mail contract to Austin, Missouri, was won by Frink and Company who also carried passengers and light freight on their stages. Two hotels opened in 1851. The Robinson House, a log hotel west of the Ocean Wave Saloon, was opened by the recently arrived G. H. Robinson who later became prosecuting attorney. The Kanesville Hotel, run by William Odle, was a renovated building purchased from Pegram and Company on Main Street. It also had a restaurant. By mid-June a library, purchased with Congressional aid, was begun and housed at William Howell's store, a beginning for the later town library.

One of the surest signs of the growing sophistication of Kanesville is presented in an August 8 report of a public meeting of Kanesville's citizens. A seven-man board was appointed by popular vote to care for the three main streets of town, Greene, Main and Hyde. The board was to see that the streets were kept clean, that no manure accumulated and that no matter collected around buildings. The public spirited citizens then heard a proposal and accepted the motion to keep hogs off the streets and required that they be penned up. Surely the removal of hogs from the streets and acts to keep manure piles cleaned

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., August 22, 1851, p. 2.

up would indicate growing pride and concern for the community.<sup>5</sup>

Probably the greatest factor in changing the general character of Kanesville was the return of some of the western miners, many by steamboat from New Orleans. While most were apparently broke, those few who had real wealth attracted the riffraff who lived off such men. The Ocean Wave Saloon, known throughout the West as a magnificent structure and source of entertainment, offered every type of device to relieve the returning miners of the weight of the gold they carried. Of course, those with funds headed West were just as readily taken for all they had. Some never made it any further because they "ran out of funds" in Kanesville. Games of chance in every known form were available, along with drinks and dancing girls, on a twenty-four hour a day basis. They need not even enter a saloon to be relieved of their surpluses as gamblers, thimble-riggers and the like awaited them on the sidewalks, eager to play for any stakes. The men were commonly armed, some heavily, and fights were not exactly rare. Kanesville was no longer the quiet, bustling town it had once been.

The first session of the District Court was held in May, with Judge James Sloan presiding. Judge Sloan handled several minor cases before reaching Kanesville's first criminal case. Robert and Martha Keys pleaded not guilty to a charge of larceny and concealment of stolen goods; supposedly the articles were boots and flat-irons taken from C. O. Mynster's premises. They were defended by G. P. Stiles, J. L. Sharpo and Joseph A. Kelting. The trial, well attended by the

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., August 8, 1851, p. 3.

public, was apparently carried off nicely. The final results was a change of venue to Mills County. At least Kanesville now had a functioning court of law to aid in the handling of some of the rougher elements.

Even though they knew they were leaving, the Saints continued to work to better the town. They were active in an attempt to get Congress to grant the town of Kanesville the one square mile which would pretty well cover the town. The idea was to sell the land at a dollar and a quarter an acre to those already on it in order to raise money for street improvements, bridges and other improvements. The major problem was that since no real deeds existed to the land or buildings, because the area had not been officially surveyed and put up for sale yet, they could not tax them. This was to remain a problem for several years and cause a serious lack of progress in some areas. In fact, the city government of Council Bluffs, elected in April, 1853, collapsed after only six months because it had no way to raise any sizeable amount of funds. Mayor Voorhis resigned and the city government ceased to exist for nearly two years. Since advertisements valued Kanesville's business investments as being worth \$150,000 the property for taxation was there, but was not touchable because of the legal technicalities involved.

Migration in 1851 was not terribly heavy. The number of California-bound people was down, but more family groups were going to Oregon. Saints from England began to arrive in sizeable numbers for the first time. Almon W. Babbitt led one group of one hundred and fifty wagons on to the Great Basin, but some Saints remained in

Kanesville for the rest of the year preparing for the 1852 traveling season.

Hiram H. Chittenden stated that 1851 was the first year of really large scale Mormon travel up river to Kanesville, and that boat loads of Mormons would continue to arrive there for a decade, along with tremendous amounts of freight destined for Salt Lake City. This business, six hundred people on two steamboats alone, would certainly help sustain Kanesville after the main body of Saints moved out of the area. This area would continue to be the great rendezvous point for Mormon expeditions.<sup>6</sup>

The order to evacuate Kanesville came in August. The Saints were ordered to escape the "wicked and ungodly" and fulfill the "ancient prophecy." The rich were to aid the poor to reach "the hiding place from the storms." The whole article was entitled "A Word of Warning to the Saints."<sup>7</sup>

The Saints took the "warning" to heart. From that time hence the Guardian abounded with ads of land for sale, stores, goods, all were up for sale. Ads or articles to draw buyers to the area appeared in almost every edition. They praised the fertility of the soil, the geographic location, the healthiness of the location, the availability of land and business opportunity and the cheapness of those items. In fact, one article was entitled "Pottawattamie County For Sale." An

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<sup>6</sup>History of Early Steamboat Navigation on the Missouri River, Life and Adventures of Joseph LaBarge, Hiram Martin Chittenden, Vol. II (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Ross & Haines, Inc., 1962), p. 171.

<sup>7</sup>The Frontier Guardian (Kanesville), August 22, 1851, p. 2.

entire Mormon camp at Harris Grove, about twenty miles north of Kanesville, placed their ad for twenty improved farms enmass. They wished to go to Salt Lake as a unit and were willing to take stock, wagons or cash for their land.

Just in case there were delinquents, and certainly there were some, Young dispatched Ezra T. Benson and Jedediah M. Grant to aid and advise Kanesville's Saints. While threats were probably used, they also brought along about \$5,000 from the Perpetual Emigrating Fund to aid those who were truly unable to raise enough funds. The letter to inform the Kanesville Saints of the wishes and actions of the church's leaders appeared in the November 14 edition. It stated, "It is the day for sacrifice; and those who are ready to sacrifice and do their duty, and come home, they may save being burnt." Hyde's editor, A. C. Ford, gave strong support to the letter. Hyde himself was on the way back to Kanesville from Salt Lake City, accompanied by Benson and Grant.<sup>8</sup>

By early 1852 much property had changed hands, the Gentiles flocked to the kill. Nowhere could one buy an established business or improved farm cheaper. By January even the Frontier Guardian had changed proprietors and would soon appear as a weekly, instead of a bi-weekly, newspaper, owned by Jacob Dawson and Company and edited by Jacob Dawson himself. The change in owners did not seem to change much of anything in the form of the paper except the title which now became The Frontier Guardian and Iowa Sentinel. The original Guardian even

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., November 14, 1851, p. 2.



included another plea for a Congressional donation of a one-square mile of land for Kanesville; in its last issue the project was being boosted for them by Representative Bernhart Henn.

Charles Babbitt, Early Days at Council Bluffs, stated that Almon Babbitt formed his opposition paper in 1850 and titled it The Weekly Western Bugle; the actual title was simply The Western Bugle. More important is Babbitt's error in the selling of the Frontier Guardian. He stated that it was taken over by Almon Babbitt (no relation to Charles). That is not true; Hyde sold the paper to Jacob Dawson and Company. Dawson was an attorney from Fremont County. He published the paper for a brief period as the Frontier Guardian and Iowa Sentinel. It was a weekly paper, devoted to the Whig cause. Hyde would probably have preferred to see the paper go to almost anyone rather than Almon Babbitt. Babbitt was his only strong, vocal critic and major opposition.

However, few copies of the Frontier Guardian and Iowa Sentinel remain. The latest available is a May 6, 1852, edition. It is probable that it was then purchased by Babbitt, who, in turn, soon sold out to Joseph Johnson.

The new Frontier Guardian and Iowa Sentinel revealed a large number of migrants departed in the spring of 1852; unfortunately Dawson was not nearly as thorough as Hyde had been in keeping track of exact numbers or even departures. He does report that at least four non-Mormon companies from more easterly regions were awaiting a departure and one large company had already taken the trail west by May 13. Other than that he simply commented that the town was crowded with migrants

and, like Hyde, added that they could register with the paper. Dawson also ran a sample constitution in each issue of the spring for companies just being formed.<sup>9</sup>

Estimates as to the number of Kanessville Mormons who departed in 1852 are not available, neither are figures for non-Mormon migration. Almon Babbitt, editor of the Western Bugle, stated in his June 6 issue that 15,000 California and Oregon migrants had passed through Kanessville. In fact, he said migration was the heaviest in three years. The merchants had sold an estimated \$150,000's worth of goods and prices were high as their supplies had run low. One merchant had a freight bill of over \$4,000, and his shelves were nearly bare.<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately Mr. Babbitt did not give us any indication of how many Mormons were on the move. Equally misfortunate is the fact that a copy of his first edition is all that remains, except for a few scattered bits and pieces left by a fire in 1855. The only thing he could add for us was that the Saints had not all left yet and that some would not be on the trail before two more weeks were up, which would make it about June 20.

Wallace Stegner, in his The Gathering of Zion, states that lists for Mormon migration in 1852 are incomplete even in The Deseret News. Totals for the year are estimated at between 1,300 and 1,400 wagons and about 10,000 people. These figures include freight wagons and emigrants

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<sup>9</sup> The Frontier Guardian and Iowa Sentinel, Kanessville, Iowa, May 13, 1852, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> The Western Bugle, Kanessville, Iowa, June 6, 1852, p. 3.

or immigrants reaching Salt Lake City from the west coast. Consequently, they do not help determine Kanesville's loss. Stegner believes that twenty-three companies of about sixty wagons each departed from Kanesville. Again, these are not necessarily Kanesville Saints, nor does he estimate the actual number of people involved.<sup>11</sup>

Robert Mullen, The Latter-day Saints: Yesterday and Today, estimates that 2,500 Saints left Kanesville and other settlements heading for the valley in 1850 and again in 1851. His estimates for 1852 are about 5,000 Saints leaving various settlements in the area. Mullen does not give any figures for Kanesville or other settlements alone.<sup>12</sup>

William E. Berrett, author of The Restored Church, stated that the population of Utah in 1850 was 11,380, and had grown to 25,000-30,000 by the end of 1852. This still gives us little to compare to other figures. He did state that there were 7,828 Saints on Potawatomi lands in 1850. However, he also adds that emigration funds were extended to the English poor in 1852, but we do not know if, or how many, of them arrived.<sup>13</sup>

Brigham Young and his two counselors, Heber Kimball and Willard Richards, had decided that all Saints within the nation should be

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<sup>11</sup>Wallace Stegner, The Gathering of Zion, the Story of the Mormon Trail (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), pp. 209-211.

<sup>12</sup>Robert Mullen, The Latter-day Saints: The Mormons Yesterday and Today (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966), p. 115.

<sup>13</sup>William E. Berrett, The Restored Church (13th ed.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1965), pp. 278-279.

within the haven of the Great Basin by the end of 1852. Their reasons were many. Most Saints from America were farmers, tillers of the soil, who need not be trained extensively in the art of producing crops. Farming in the desert would be tough enough, even for experienced farmers. More important was the fact that most of the European Converts waiting a chance to go to Salt Lake were urbanites. Many of them were industrial workers; some were highly skilled tradesmen who would be tremendously important to the Saints in the future. Their skills were of little use however, until sufficient crops could be raised to feed them. The skilled farmers, in other words the Americans, had to be brought home first.

Consideration also was undoubtedly given to the apparent effects the evil world was having on camps of Saints outside of the valley. Kanesville had become a prime example, drunkenness was increasing, religious disputes arose as some became disenchanted with Mormonism or with Brigham Young and the prosperity some were enjoying was beginning to compete with the church in importance. These Saints must be rescued and brought into the flock where they could be watched over more closely and prevented from straying.

All this, of course, meant the end of the Saints in Kanesville, not all left, but few remained, of about thirty-eight churches, one was left and a few Saints were scattered throughout the area. It was not the end of Kanesville, however. Far from it. Though reduced seriously in size by the loss of the Saints, the town did not die. It dropped to an estimated two thousand persons, but was a far cry from the picture painted by John Taylor who reported that in mid-summer of 1852 Kanesville

was deserted, its stores stripped of goods and its streets empty. This report must have been wishful thinking, or the results of tremendous summer heat which drove everyone inside.<sup>14</sup>

Kanesville was still an important transfer point for westward bound freight. It would continue to be the rendezvous point for migrating Saints, and, of course, a jump-off point for those bound for points west. Numerous gold and silver strikes would ensure an almost continuous flow of adventurers, settlers, and speculators through the area which, in turn, would hold or attract merchants.

The entire frontier, and seemingly, most of the country knew the Saints were vacating Kanesville. The land and other property available was grabbed up, often at rock-bottom prices. People flocked to the scene to take advantage of the situation. Hundreds purchased land already at least partially cleared with houses, barns and sheds already erected. Some Saints simply traded for wagons, teams and supplies; a cheap price for an improved farm but often it was the best they could do. The point is that the country was not abandoned, nor left "stripped" and deserted. The market for flour and grain was still there, and people were going to be attracted to the area to meet the demands for them. The area as a whole retained a population, a permanent population. Though the population was smaller than before the Saints departed, smaller even than in 1849, there were still an estimated 2,500 people in the area, which was quite sizeable for such an advanced, frontier settlement.

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<sup>14</sup>Stegner, The Gathering of Zion, p. 211.

In fact, the land office, which opened its doors in March, 1853, did a tremendous amount of business in the first few months it was opened. Joseph Johnson, new owner of the Western Bugle, was led to comment in September that the land office was extremely busy. So busy that the preemptors could hardly be handled fast enough. He stated, perhaps a bit optimistically, that no land office in the western states had ever sold so much land in so little time or registered claims at a faster rate than in Kanesville. Even if he were stretching things a bit, it would still indicate a town that was alive and perhaps even growing.<sup>15</sup>

Meanwhile, other events were in progress which would not only ensure the future of Council Bluffs, but would enable it to grow into a city of major proportions. Railroad rumors, articles on railroads, surveys and conventions concerning trans-continentals had been going on for years. However, in 1851, the same year the Saints were told to leave Kanesville, the Rock Island railroad reached Joliet, Illinois and prepared to extend its lines to Iowa. Davenport soon became the favored point at which the Rock Island hoped to cross the Mississippi River. Davenport was on a fairly straight line with Joliet and became the most natural point to cross the river. Rock Island had no intention of stopping at the Mississippi; and anyone who looked at a map of Iowa could easily see that the Council Bluffs area was almost straight west of Davenport and was also very close to a line from Chicago through Davenport. Furthermore, Kanesville was the only sizeable population

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<sup>15</sup>Joseph E. Johnson, The Council Bluffs Western Bugle, September 7, 1853, p. 2.

center on the Missouri above St. Joseph, which helped its chances immensely because it was a guaranteed market of some size.

Hopes rose high in the breast of Kanesville's citizens. In January, 1852, a committee chaired by Orson Hyde was selected to contact railroad companies concerning the possibility of a line to Kanesville. The same committee sought to procure a grant of land from the government to be used to encourage a railroad to come to their town. Kanesville was just beginning the serious business of attracting railroads; an effort they would continue in the face of many setbacks for years to come.<sup>16</sup>

In 1852, as the Saints prepared to depart, the heads of the Chicago and Rock Island company formed the Mississippi and Missouri Railway Company. Their surveys, under Chief Engineer Peter A. Dey, were to begin at Davenport and run to the area of Kanesville. Happily for the future of Council Bluffs the survey, which was not begun until 1853, was to be conducted by Grenville Dodge, who was to become Council Bluffs' most famous citizen in the years to come. Dodge was also to play an extremely important role in the process of making Council Bluffs a major railroad center, as well as the official jump-off place for the Union Pacific transcontinental railroad.<sup>17</sup>

On January 19, 1853, the Iowa legislature approved a bill which allowed the name of Council Bluffs to be substituted for the town

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<sup>16</sup>The Frontier Guardian (Kanesville), January 9, 1852, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup>Major-General Grenville M. Dodge, How We Built the Union Pacific Railway and Other Railway Papers and Addresses (Reprint; Denver: Sage Books, 1965), pp. 5-6.

previously known as Kanesville. The effective date of the change actually being February 19, 1853, when the act was approved.<sup>18</sup>

On January 24 an act of the state legislature authorized the incorporation of the city of Council Bluffs, Iowa. Hadley D. Johnson was their Iowa Senate representative at the time, and Archibald S. Bryant was the House member who had helped get the bills through. Since the act was in effect immediately, Council Bluffs was actually authorized to incorporate before it could legally be called Council Bluffs.<sup>19</sup>

The exact reason for the change of the name of Kanesville to Council Bluffs is not exactly clear. The post office at Trader's Point, originally called the Nebraska Post Office, had been legally designated as the Council Bluffs Post Office for some time. Now the name was appropriated for the Kanesville Post Office.

The reasons usually given are two in number. The first is that Kanesville was simply the dominant town in an area known far and wide as the Council Bluffs. The inhabitants of the town, desiring to rename the town now that the Saints were gone, naturally selected that name. Their idea, of course, was to make the town better known by directly associating it with the Council Bluffs which was a far more widely known name than Kanesville. Kanesville, a name chosen by the Mormons, was selected to honor their benefactors, but now they were gone, so it

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<sup>18</sup>Acts, Resolutions and Memorials Passed At The Fourth General Assembly Of The State of Iowa, William H. Merritt, (State Printer) Iowa City, 1853, p. 72.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 108.



was simply no longer appropriate.

Thus goes the first argument, a simple, direct one. The second version is somewhat more devious in nature. Some people feel that the major reason for changing the name of the town from Kanesville to Council Bluffs was a maneuver to ensure the gaining of the railroad. The act passed by the Iowa legislature granted the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad Company a charter which provided that said railway would run from Davenport to the Council Bluffs. When passed the term Council Bluffs meant the entire area from Kanesville to the mouth of the Platte River to the south and to the vicinity of what is now Fort Calhoun to the north. Possible crossings for the railroad lay, as later surveys proved, at the site of the Mormon ferry east of Winter Quarters, at a place directly west of Kanesville, at Trader's Point and at a place just east of the mouth of the Platte. In an effort to ensure that the proposed route would pass directly through their town the people got together and renamed it Council Bluffs; hoping, by this ploy that the railroad could then be forced, if necessary, to opt for the route most beneficial to the town. Noting the fervor with which Kanesville's citizens had kept track of and participated in railroad planning and speculations the latter view would not seem as far out of line as one might at first believe.

Regardless of name, Council Bluffs antecedents had been hardy, tough to kill out. Though slow to get started, the town which eventually arose to become Council Bluffs dominated the entire area for at least another two decades after the Mormons departed. The town could have folded up on a number of occasions; two events in particular

could have left it deserted: the departure of the Mormons and the loss of the headquarters, switching yards and repair shops of the Union Pacific in the late 1860's. It could easily have never become a town at all, but rather just another little village along the mighty Missouri or even have been abandoned completely.

Circumstances and fate played as important a role in the creation of Council Bluffs predecessors as did its natural geographic location. Many were the events which looked as though they would have little or no effects on the area, but, in the end, contributed major elements to the growth of the site.

From fur trading posts, Indian village, army blockhouse, missionary church, temporary resting place, tiny village, to major frontier town, Council Bluffs grew. For a quarter of a century she dominated the entire area; it rivaled any town on the Missouri River above St. Louis, except Independence as a jump-off point for westward migrations. People from all parts of the nation and Europe passed through her portals, headed west. Some stayed and settled the land; thousands rounded out their outfits with necessary purchases and many gathered an entire outfit for the journey westward at Kanesville-Council Bluffs.

Though secondary to her upstart young neighbor to the west, Omaha, in modern times, Council Bluffs and her forerunners played an important role in the development of the area and of the entire West. Her history is deeply intertwined in the development of the entire West for which she was a starting place for the migrant and base camp for transportation and communication systems. Her past, hopefully, will

not be forgotten; her rich history and heritage, often neglected in the past, should be a source of pride and unity for the city of Council Bluffs, Iowa.

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